三国志 ㉙

政略結婚

横山光輝

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SANGOKUSHI

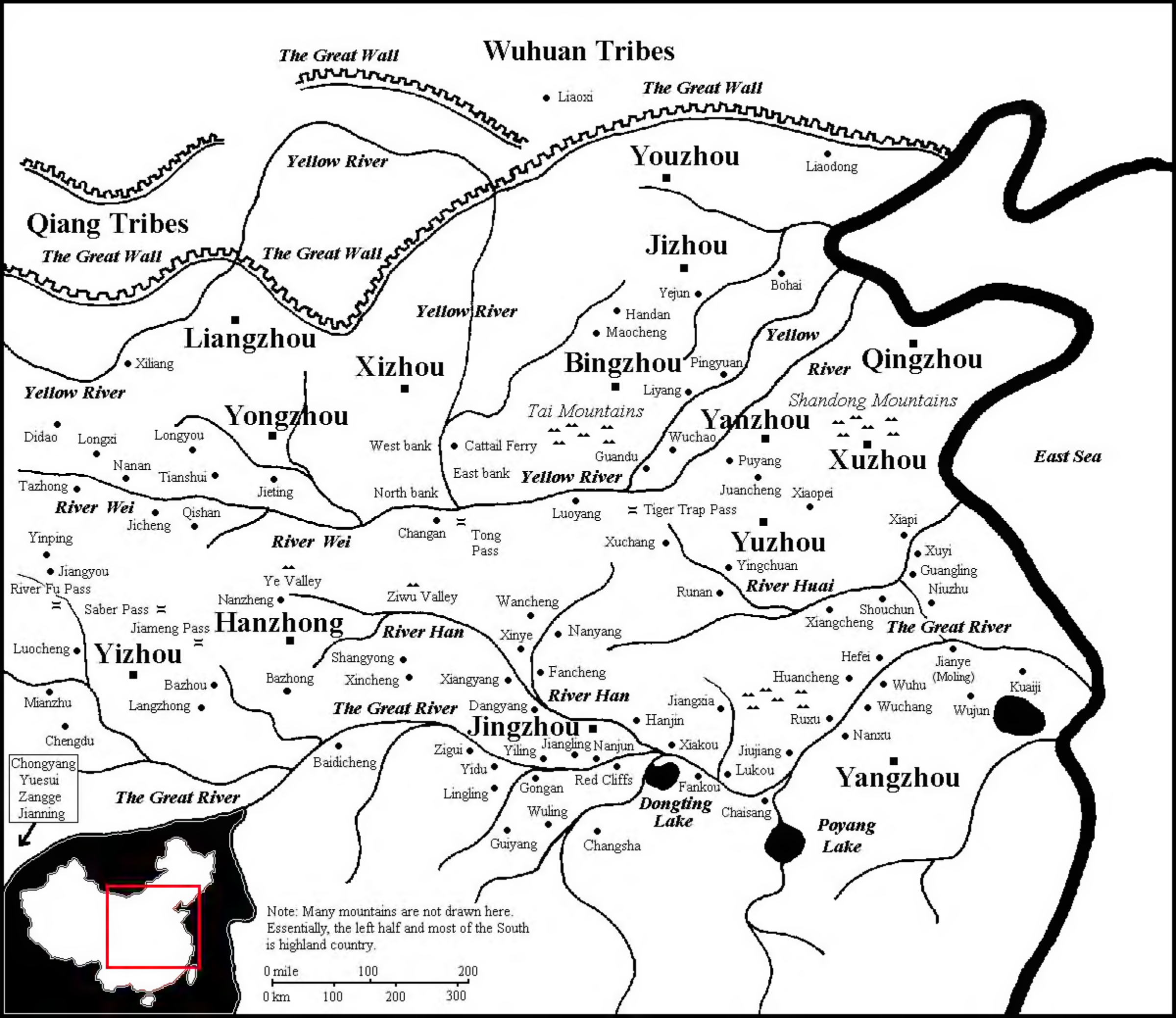
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DIPLOMATIC MARRIAGE



YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU

LIU BEI XUANDE


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS

PART 1: CHARACTERS TO KEEP IN MIND



CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. HAVING BECOME THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, HE HAS RELEGATED EMPEROR XIAN AS A MERE PUPPET RULER.



CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.



CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.



CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.



EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS WHO THEN PRESENTED HER TO EMPEROR LING. SHE SOON BECAME EMPEROR LING'S FAVOURITE CONSORT AND GAVE BIRTH TO PRINCE LIU BIAN. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY DONG ZHUO WHEN HE CAME TO POWER.



DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE MIGHTY GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.



DIAO CHAN:
A SLAVE GIRL OF WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.



DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.



DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.



GAN NING:
FORMER-PIRATE WHO IS NOW A FIRECE GENERAL OF WU.



GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING AND FRIEND TO LIU BEI. HE WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO AFTER THE LATTER TRICKS HIM AND KILLS HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.



GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. HE IS AS FIERCE AS GUAN YU BUT IS MORE RESTRAINED AND CALM IN HIS MANNERISMS.



GUAN PING:
GUAN YU'S ADOPTED SON WHO FIRST APPEARS IN VOLUME 19.



GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. HE DIES FROM ILLNESS DURING CAO CAO'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE YUAN FAMILY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).



JIA XU:
THE SHREWD STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO ZHANG XIU. HE AND ZHANG XIU PLOTS A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, BUT SUCCEEDS IN KILLING DIAN WEI. IN VOLUME 16, HE AND ZHANG XIU DEFECT TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.



LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU REBELS.



LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A KIND AND VIRTUOUS MAN, SAID TO BE THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI.



LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO SICKNESS IN VOLUME 22.



LIU XIE (EMPEROR XIAN OF HAN):
FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE OF CHENLIU, HE IS THE CURRENT EMPEROR OF HAN, THOUGH CAO CAO HAS SEIZED ALL REAL POWER AWAY FROM HIM.



LU BU:
HE IS SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR WITH THE FASTEST HORSE, THE RED HARE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES, AND EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.



LU SU:
MILITARY GENERAL AND ADVISOR OF WU.



MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIANG AND FATHER OF MA CHAO. UNLIKE THE ACTUAL HISTORICAL FIGURE, HE IS DEPICTED AS A HAN LOYALIST WHO SIGNS DONG CHENG'S BLOOD SEAL PLEDGE.



PANG TONG SHIYUAN:
NICKNAMED THE YOUNG PHOENIX (FENGCHU), HE IS A MASTERFUL STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING, ALONG WITH ZHUGE LIANG AND XU SHU. HE CURRENTLY SERVES NO LORD BUT ASSISTS WU IN THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS.



SHUI JING:
HIS REAL NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING (MEANING WATER MIRROR). HE IS THE TEACHER OF ZHUGE LIANG, PANG TONG, AND XU SHU.



SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN. IN VOLUME 19, ASSASSINS MAKE A FAILED ATTEMPT AT HIS LIFE. HIS MENTAL HEALTH SOON DETERIORATES DUE TO THE INCIDENT WITH YU JI AND HE SUCCUMBS TO DEATH.



SUN JIAN:
BORN IN WU COMMANDERY, HE WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA. HE PARTICIPATES IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. BUT IS FINDING OF THE IMPERIAL SEAL CAUSES LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO TO TURN ON HIM. IN VOLUME 7, HE TRIES TO EXACT HIS REVENGE ON LIU BIAO, ONLY TO BE KILLED IN BATTLE.



SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE AND THE CURRENT RULER OF WU, A REGION IN SOUTHERN CHINA.



TAISHI CI:
SUN CE'S TRUSTED GENERAL WHO DEFECTED TO SERVE SUN CE AFTER BEING CAPTURED IN VOLUME 11.



TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG.



THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY SUCCEEDED IN ASSASSINATING GENERAL HE JIN BUT WERE LATER KILLED BY HE JIN'S ARMY LED BY YUAN SHAO.



WANG YUN:
AN OLD MAN WHO HOLDS THE POST OF MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN HAN IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHANG IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).



WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.



XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.



XU CHU:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.



XU SHU (SHAN FU):
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING. AFTER A BRIEF STINT OF SERVING LIU BEI, HE IS TRICKED INTO COMING TO XUCHANG AND SERVING CAO CAO (VOLUME 21).



XUN YU:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S MOST TALENTED ADVISORS.



YAN LIANG:
HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 17, HE WAS KILLED BY GUAN YU WHILE FIGHTING CAO CAO'S ARMY AT BAIMA.



YI JI:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU BIAO WHO WARNS LIU BEI ABOUT CAI MAO'S PLOT TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI IN VOLUME 20.



YUAN SHAO:
OLDER BROTHER OF YUAN SHU AND THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU. AFTER MANY YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST CAO CAO FOR CONTROL OF NORTHERN CHINA, HE AND HIS FAMILY IS DEFEATED AND KILLED.



YUAN SHU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE DECLARES HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIES OF THIRST AFTER BEING ON THE RUN FROM LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMIES.



ZHANG FEI YIDE:
A FIRECE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU.



ZHANG LIAO:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S TOP GENERALS. HE WAS FORMERLY LU BU'S SUBORDINATE BUT DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AFTER THE FORMER'S EXECUTION.



ZHANG XIU:
LORD OF WANCHENG WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL CAO CAO DURING THE BATTLE OF WANCHENG IN VOLUME 12. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT AGAINST CAO CAO, HE FINALLY DECIDES TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO IN VOLUME 16.



ZHAO YUN ZILONG:
A FORMER RETAINER TO YUAN SHAO WHO LATER DEFECTED TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN. AFTER GONGSUN ZAN'S DEATH, HE LATER MEETS UP WITH LIU BEI AND FINALLY BECOMES HIS RETAINER.



ZHOU CANG:
FORMERLY A YELLOW TURBAN, HE MEETS GUAN YU IN VOLUME 18 AND BECOMES HIS SUBORDINATE.



ZHOU YU GONGJIN:
SWORN BROTHER OF SUN CE, HE IS A SKILLED ADMIRAL WHO SERVES AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FOR WU'S ARMY. CONVINCED THAT HIS ALLY KONGMING IS TOO MUCH OF A THREAT, HE CURRENTLY SCHEMES FOR HIS DEATH.



ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING:
MASTERFUL STRATEGIST AND FORMER STUDENT OF SHUI JING. IN VOLUME 21, HE YIELDS TO LIU BEI'S PERSISTENCE AND DECIDES TO BECOME HIS SUBJECT.

SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS
PART 2: OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS



CAI MAO:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU BIAO, WHO BECAME THE SUPREME ADMIRAL OF WEI'S NAVY WHEN JINGZHOU SURRENDERED TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE IS FRAMED BY ZHOU YU'S PLOT AND THUS EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.



CAO REN:
GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO.



CAO HONG:
GENERAL AND COUSIN TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 6, HE SAVES CAO CAO FROM CERTAIN DEATH.



CAO SONG:
CAO CAO'S FATHER AND A FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED BY TAO QIAN'S ESCORT AND FORMER YELLOW TURBAN, ZHANG KAI.



DING YUAN:
GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU AND LU BU'S FOSTER-FATHER. HE OBJECTED TO DONG ZHUO'S SCHEME TO PLACE PRINCE CHENLIU AS THE EMPEROR OF HAN, EARNING DONG ZHUO'S WRATH. IN VOLUME 4, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS FOSTER-SON, LU BU, WHO THEN DEFECTS TO SERVE DONG ZHUO.



EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG:
MOTHER TO THE FORMER EMPEROR LING AND GRANDMOTHER TO EMPEROR XIAN. IN VOLUME 3, EMPRESS HE ORDERS FOR HER DEATH TO SECURE HER SON LIU BIAN'S THRONE AS THE NEXT EMPEROR OF HAN.



GAO SHUN:
ONE OF LU BU'S TRUSTED GENERALS. HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH HIS LORD IN VOLUME 14.



GUO SI:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.



HUANG GAI:
LOYAL GENERAL OF WU, WHOSE FAMILY HAS SERVED THE SUN FAMILY FOR THREE GENERATIONS.



HE JIN:
OLDER BROTHER OF EMPRESS HE. ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER BECAME EMPEROR LING'S CONSORT. IN VOLUME 3, HE ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE THE TEN ATTENDANTS, ONLY TO BE DISSUADED FROM DOING SO BY HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE IS LATER KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.



HOU CHENG:
ONE OF LU BU'S GENERALS. IN VOLUME 14, HE, ALONG WITH GENERALS WEI XU AND SONG XIAN, BETRAYS LU BU AND DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.



HUA XIONG:
FAMED GENERAL SERVING UNDER DONG ZHUO. IN VOLUME 5, HE DEFEATS SUN JIAN'S ARMY BUT IS LATER KILLED BY GUAN YU.



JI PING:
IMPERIAL PHYSICIAN OF HAN WHO, WITH DONG CHENG, PLOTS TO POISON CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 17, CAO CAO DISCOVERS THEIR PLOT AND EXECUTES HIM.



JIANG GAN:
CHILDHOOD FRIEND OF ZHOU YU AND NOW AN ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE FAILS TO PERSUADE ZHOU YU TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO, AND INADVERTANTLY HELPS ZHOU YU'S PLOT TO FRAME CAI MAO.



JIANG QIN:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.



LADY FUYOU:
FICTIONAL CHARACTER CREATED BY MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA AND LIU BEI'S FIRST LOVE. ZHANG FEI FORMERLY SERVED HER FAMILY, WHO WERE MASSCRED BY THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS.



LADY MI:
LIU BEI'S FIRST WIFE.

LI JUE:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND GUO SI TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.



LI DIAN:
SCHOLARLY GENERAL UNDER THE SERVICE OF CAO CAO.



LIU BIAN:
THE SON OF EMPRESS HE AND BRIEFLY THE EMPEROR OF HAN AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, EMPEROR LING. IN VOLUME 4, HE WAS DEPOSED BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER BY LI RU.



LIU FENG:
LIU BEI'S ADOPTED SON. ORIGINALLY THE NEPHEW OF LIU MI, HE WAS ADOPTED BY LIU BEI WHO TOOK A LIKING TO HIM IN VOLUME 21.

LU ZHI:
LIU BEI'S FORMER TEACHER AND THE PALACE COMMANDER WHO WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF LEADING THE HAN ARMY AGAINST THE YELLOW TURBANS. HE WAS LATER DEMOTED FOR FAILING TO BRIBE ONE OF THE IMPERIAL MESSENGERS.



LIU QI:
ELDEST SON OF LIU BIAO AND THE OLDER BROTHER OF LIU CONG.



MA LIANG:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS. FOURTH YOUNGEST OF THE FIVE MA BROTHERS, AND IS NOTED FOR HIS INTELLECT AND WHITE EYEBROWS.



MI ZHU:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS.

SUN QIAN:
ADVISOR/EMISSARY SERVING LIU BEI. (HIS ROLE IS MUCH SMALLER IN SANGOKUSHI COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL NOVEL.)



YU JIN:
GENERAL SERVING CAO CAO. (IN RECORDS OF THE THRE KINGDOMS, WRITTEN BY CHEN SHOU, YU JIN IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS FOR WEI.)



ZHANG BAO:
ZHANG JIAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE YELLOW TURBAN'S GENERAL OF THE LAND. HE WAS KILLED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 2.



ZHANG JIAO:
LEADER OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION. HE PASSED AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 3.

ZHANG ZHAO/ZHANG HONG:
THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANGDONG, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "TWO ZHANGS." AFTER SUN CE'S ADMANT INSISTENCE, THEY DECIDE TO SERVE HIM AND HELP HIS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER JIANGNAN AND JIANGDONG.

ZHOU TAI:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

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DIPLOMATIC MARRIAGE

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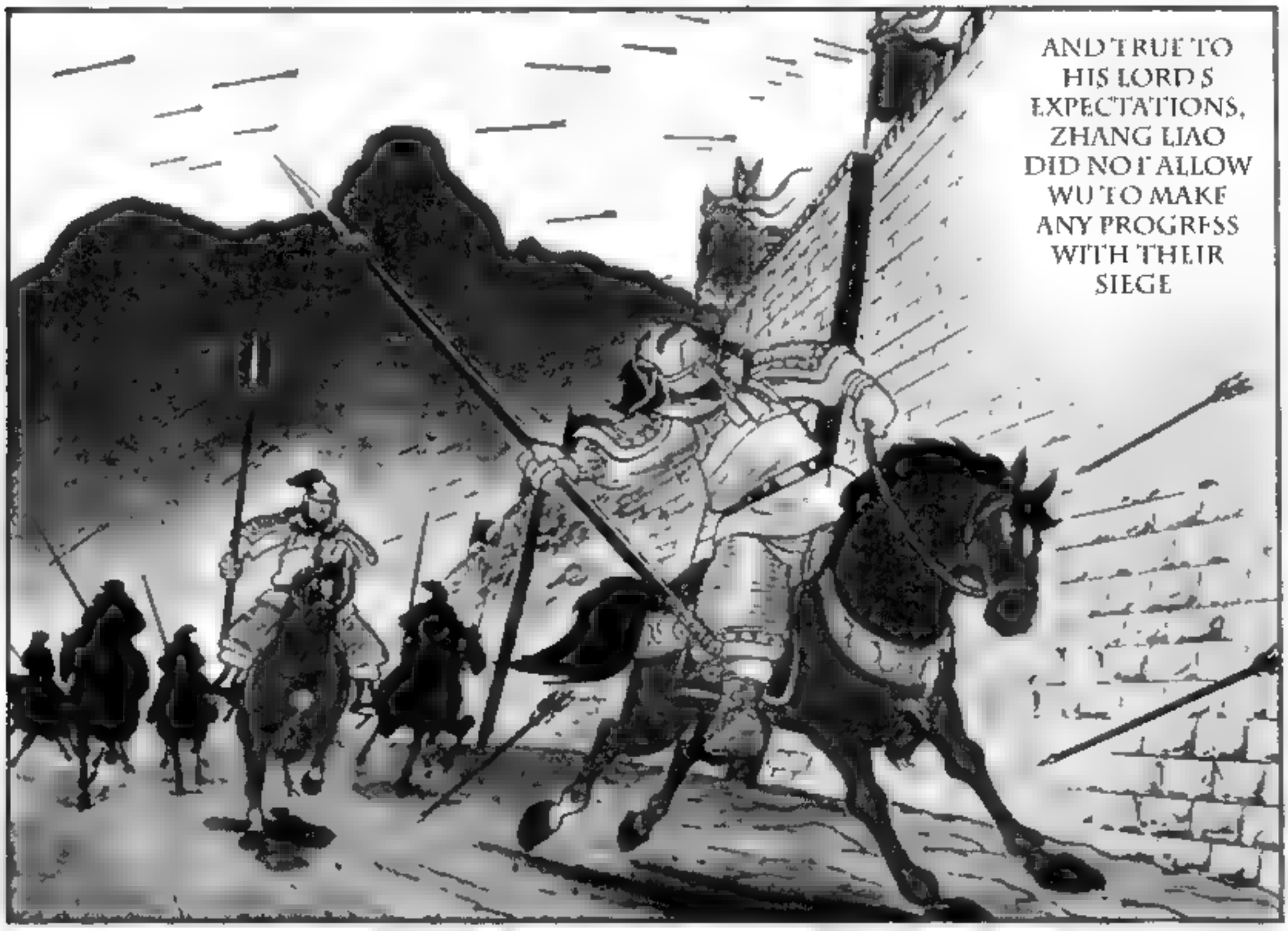
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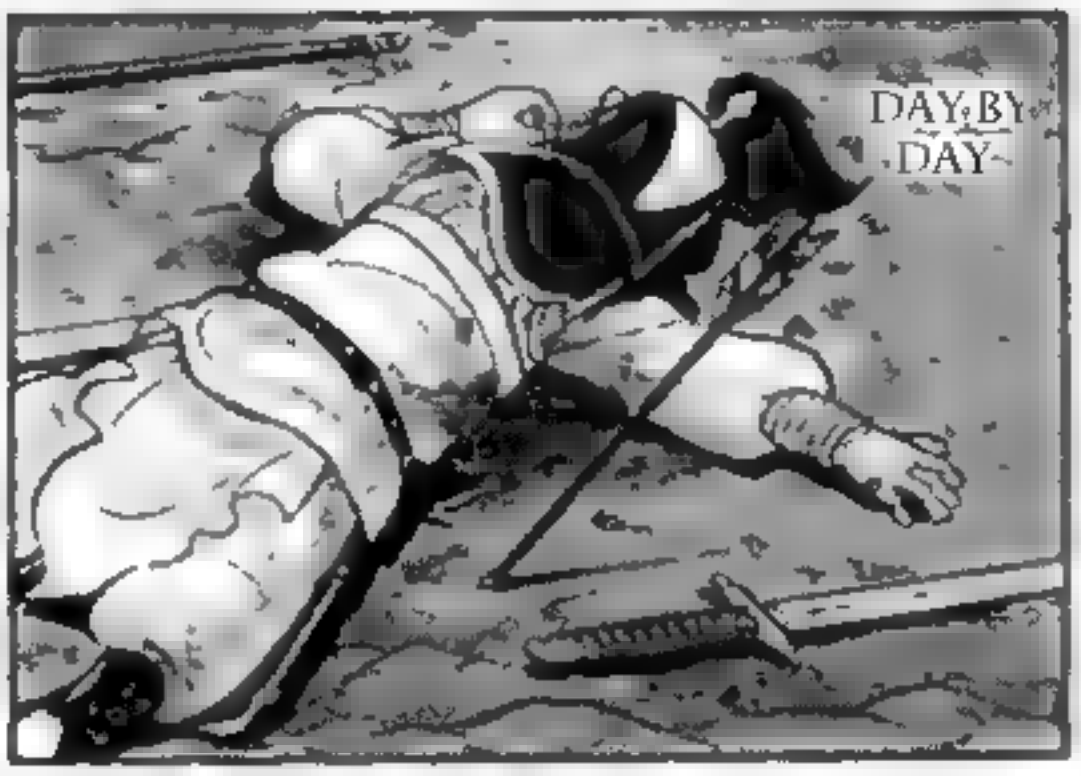
DEFENSE OF HEFEI




CAO CAO HAD LEFT ZHANG LIAO TO DEFEND THE KEY CITY OF HEFEI


AND TRUE TO HIS LORD'S EXPECTATIONS, ZHANG LIAO DID NOT ALLOW WU TO MAKE ANY PROGRESS WITH THEIR SIEGE


WU CASUALTIES GREW LARGER AND LARGER


DAY BY DAY


吳

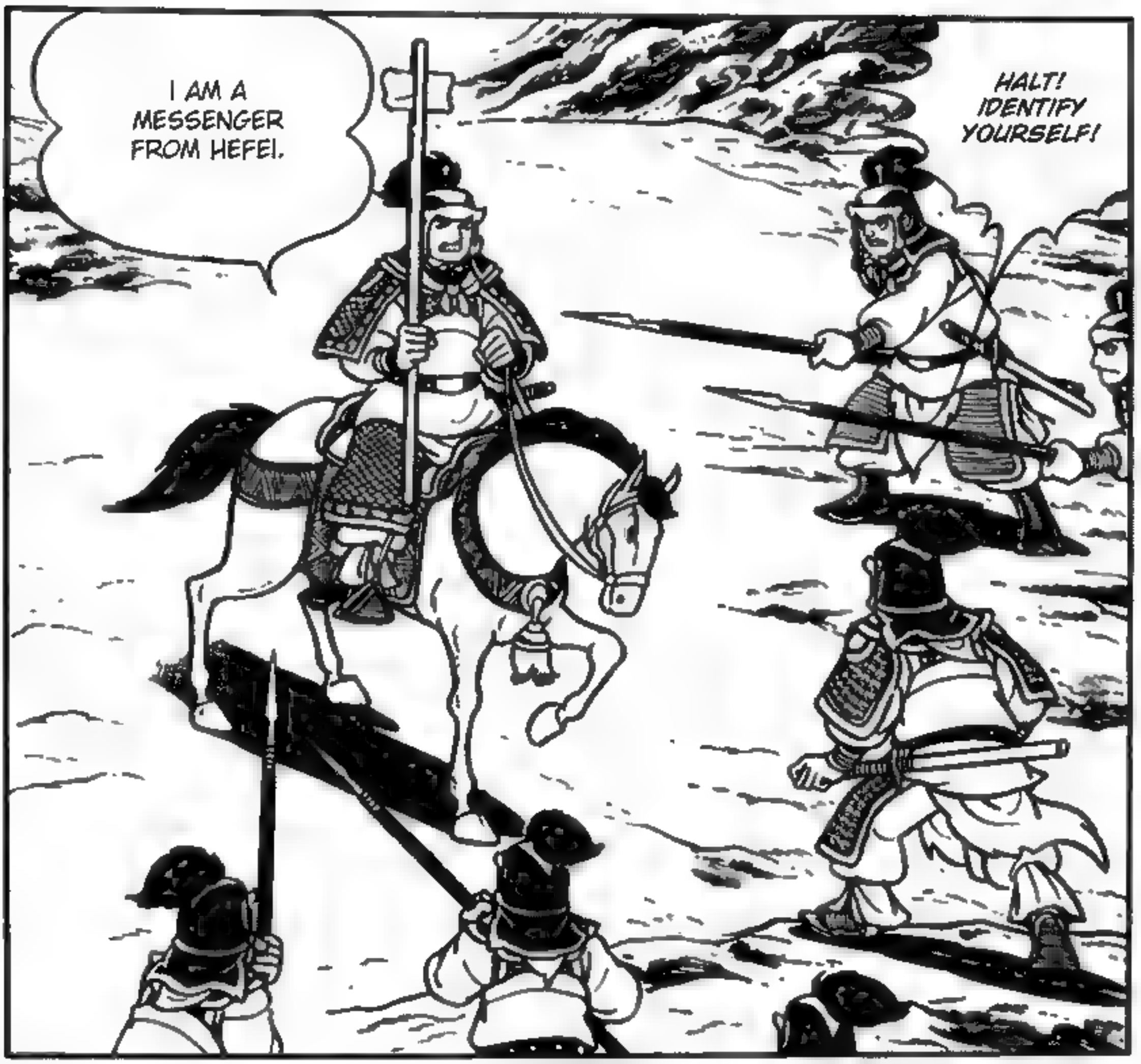



HM?


HUH?




カッカッ

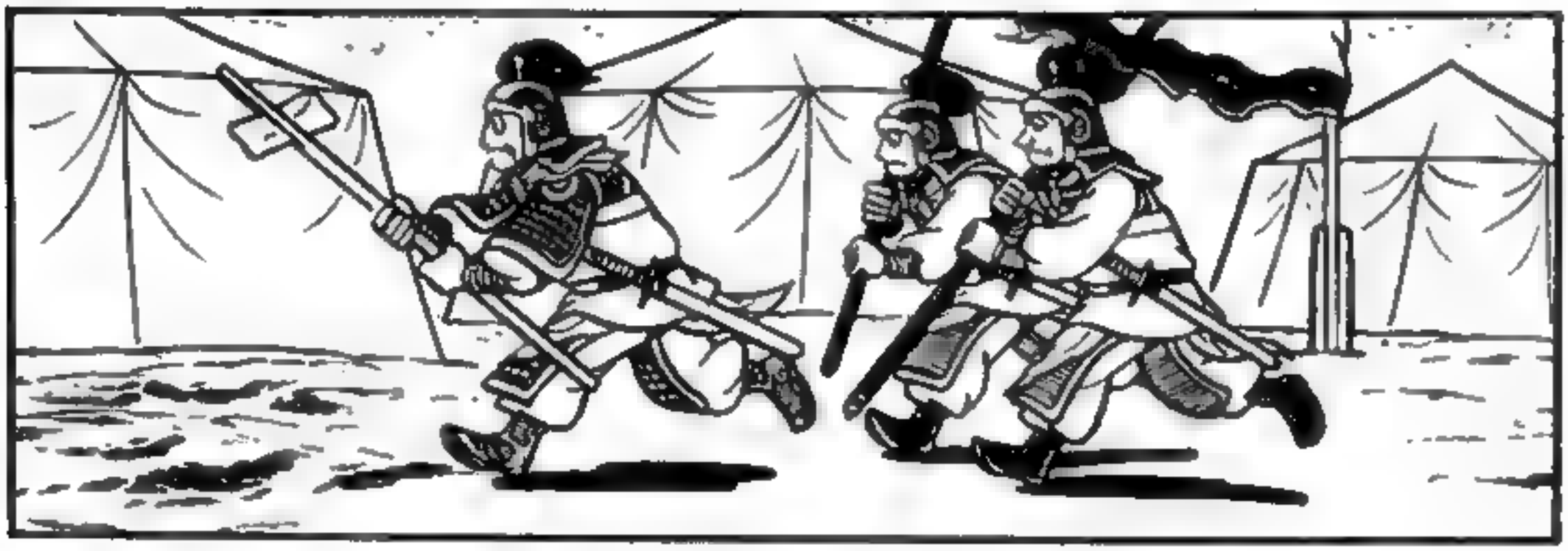

I AM A MESSENGER FROM HEFEI.
HALT! IDENTIFY YOURSELF!




GIVE THIS LETTER TO YOUR LEADER.


カ"カ"カ"


I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE THEN.




A MESSAGE FROM HEFEI?
YES, MY LORD.


!?


WHAT COULD IT BE ABOUT...?

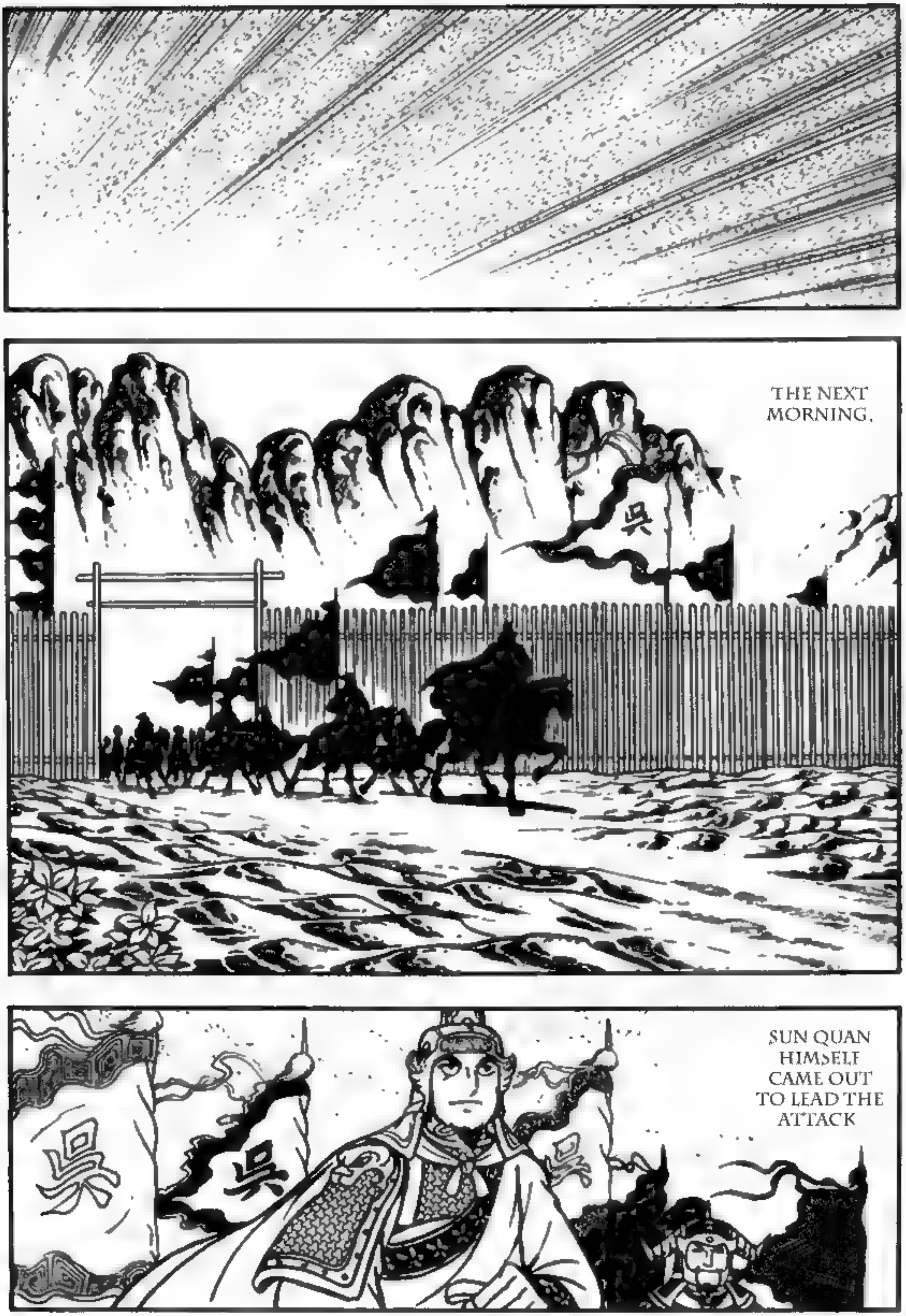

TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF!




WHAT IS IT, MY LORD!?
THAT INSOLENT WRETCH!


ARE THE SOLDIERS OF WU MOSQUITOES OR FLIES? I ASK BECAUSE YOU SURROUND US ANNOYINGLY YET FAIL TO BE OF ANY REAL THREAT OR DO ANY HARM. IF YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF FIGHTING, I SUGGEST YOU RETREAT BACK TO YOUR HOMELANDS.


HOW DARE HE LIKEN MY ARMY TO MOSQUITOES!
I SHALL TEACH THAT ARROGANT ZHANG LIAO A LESSON ONCE AND FOR ALL TOMORROW!


THE NEXT MORNING.
SUN QUAN HIMSELF CAME OUT TO LEAD THE ATTACK

AS IF RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE, ZHANG LIAO, TOO, PERSONALLY CAME OUT FROM HEFEI

YES, SIR!

ZHOU YU IS CURRENTLY SICK SO OUR ONLY REAL ENEMY IS SUN QUAN HIMSELF! FAILURE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED, UNDERSTOOD!?



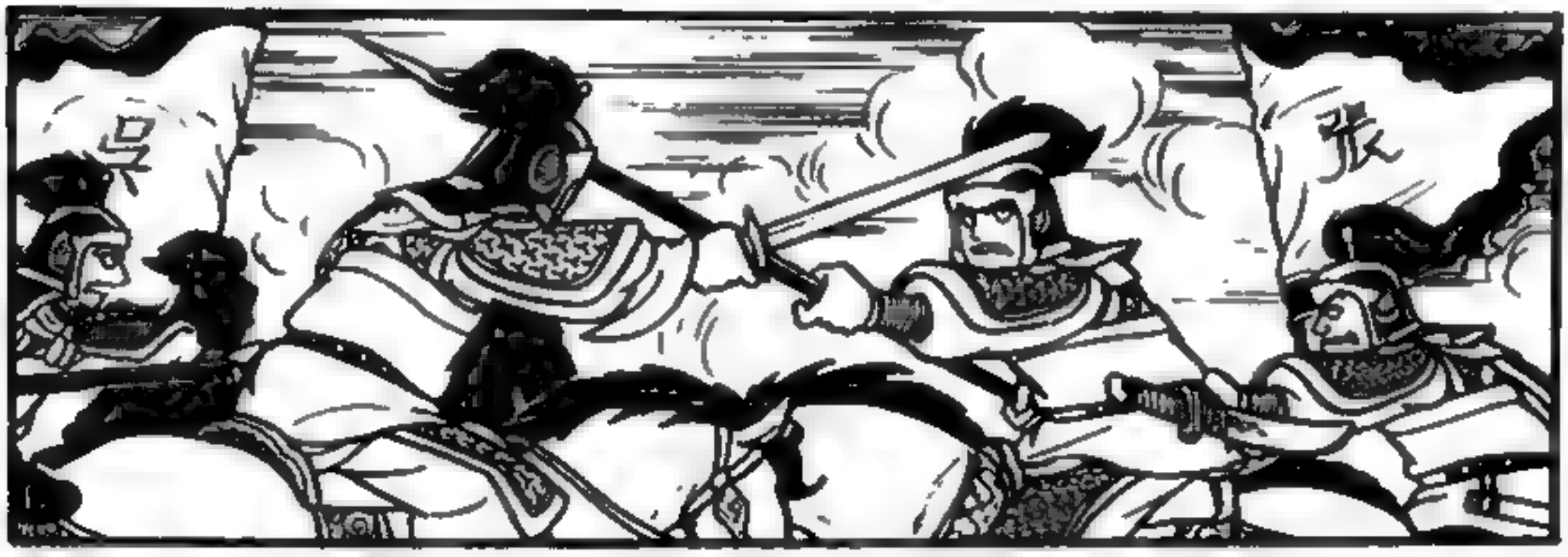

I SHALL CAPTURE HEFEI ONCE AND FOR ALL TODAY, ZHANG LIAO!


AND I SHALL FINALLY HAVE MY REVENGE FOR THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS, SUN QUAN!


CHARGE!


ATTACK!



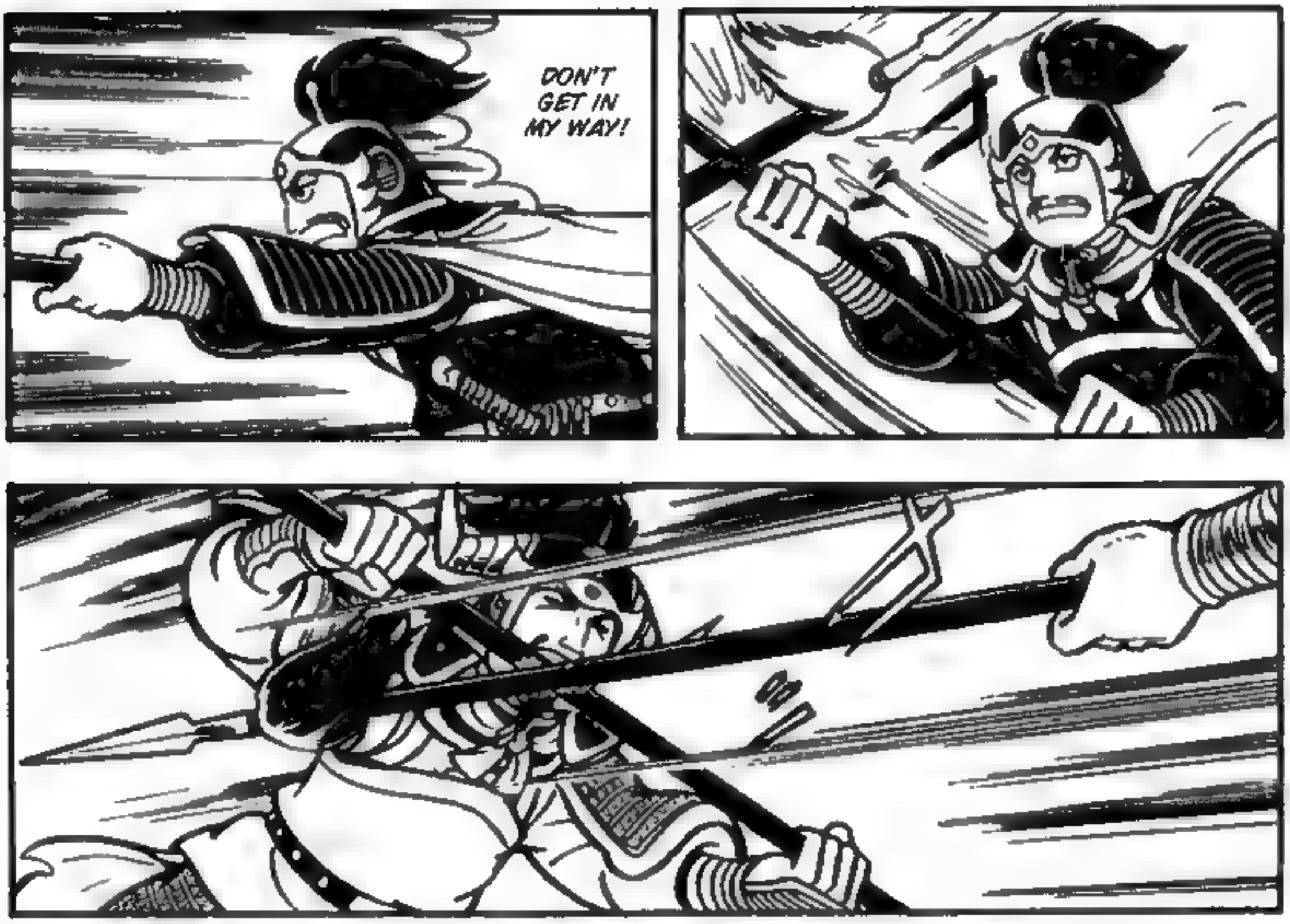




SUN QUAN! LET'S SETTLE THIS BETWEEN US COMMAND-ERS!

KNOW YOUR PLACE!

HMPH!


DON'T
GET IN
MY WAY!

TAKING THAT MAN'S HEAD ALONE CAN MORE THAN MAKEUP FOR OUR SHAMEFUL DEFEAT AT RED CLIFFS!

AHH! THERE'S SUN QUAN!

SUN QUAN! GET READY TO TAKE THIS LI DIAN'S SPEAR!

GET LOST!

ANOTHER ONE!?

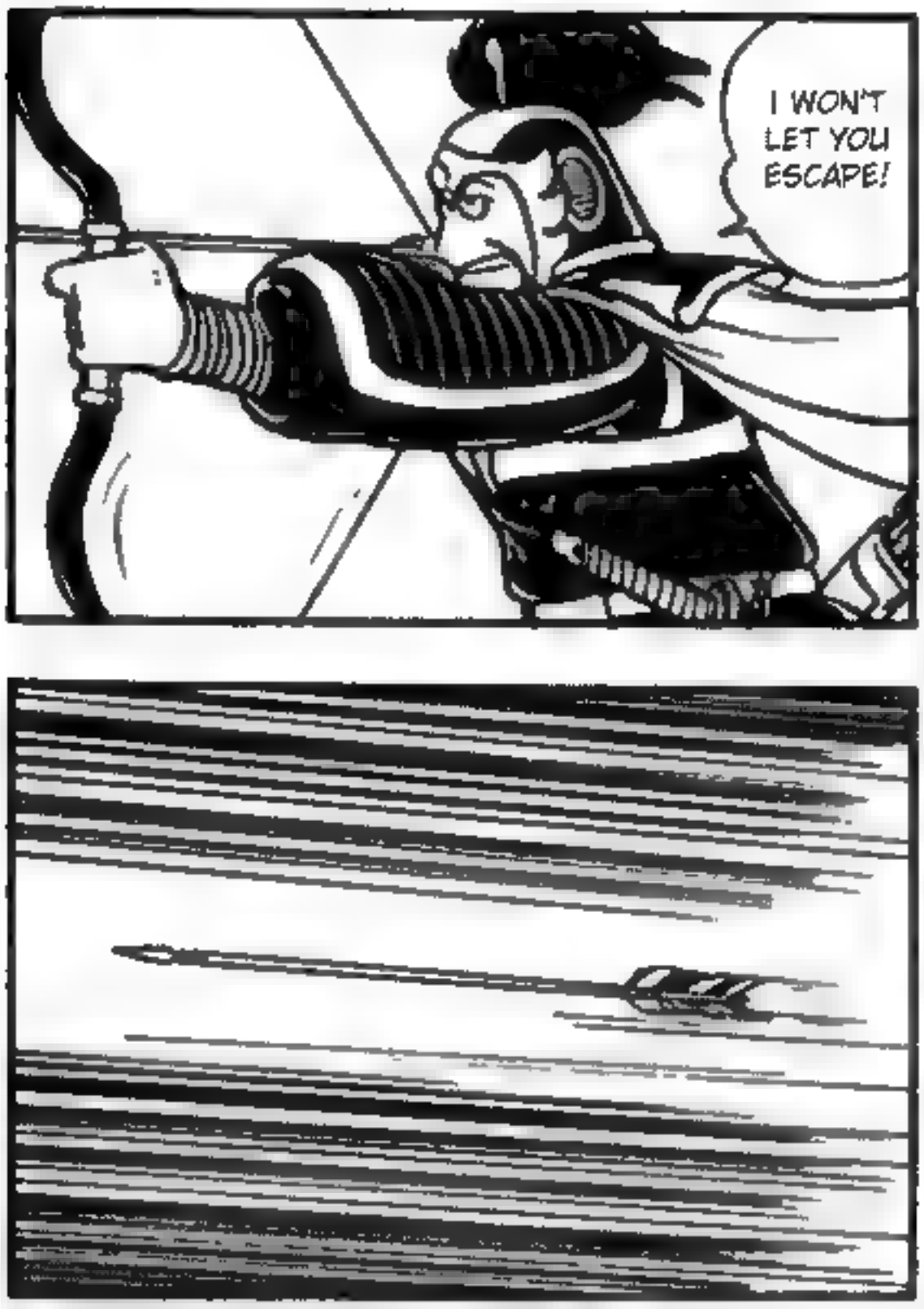
TAKE THIS!

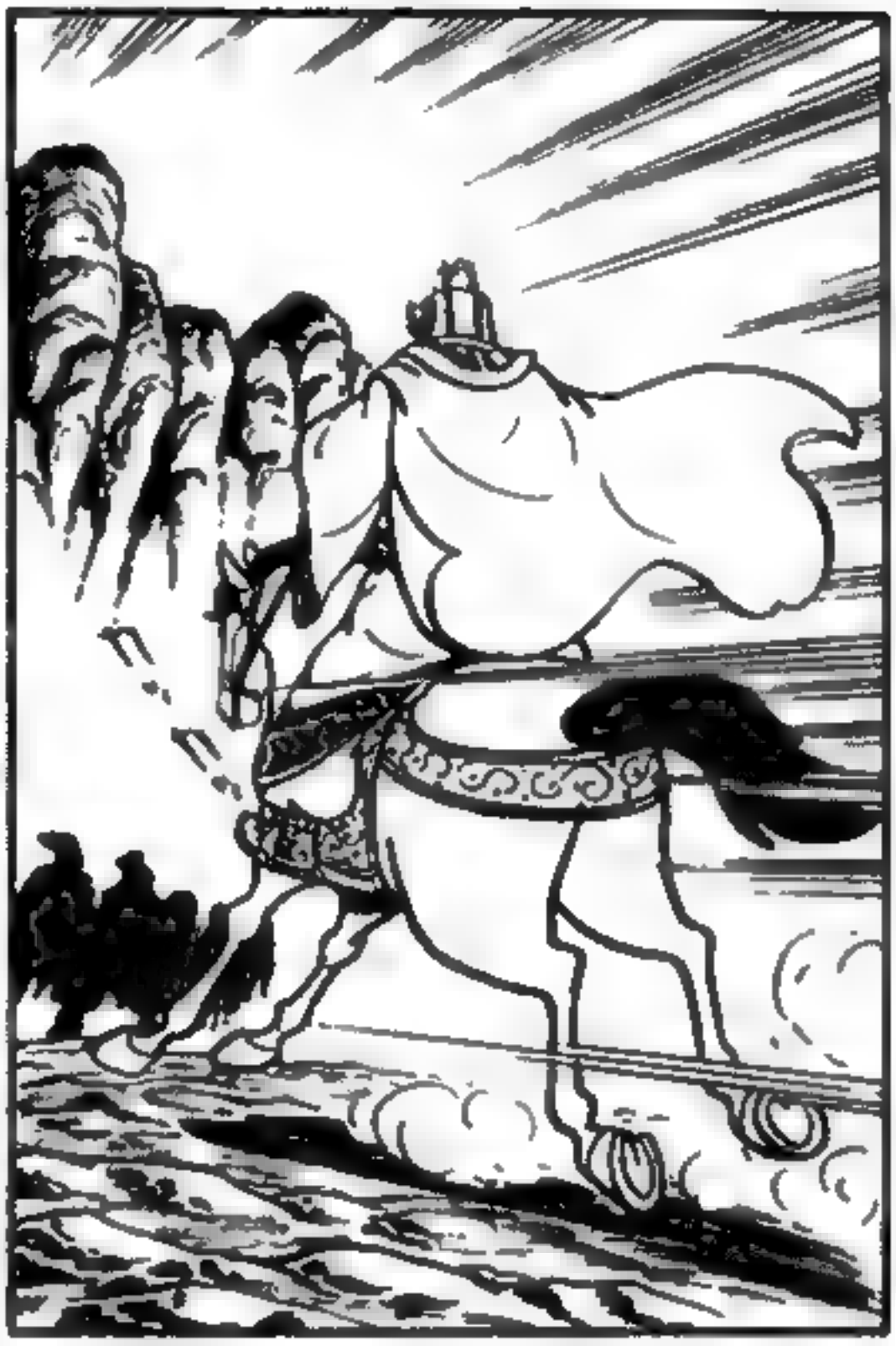
SONG QIAN!

GAH!

F-FINE...

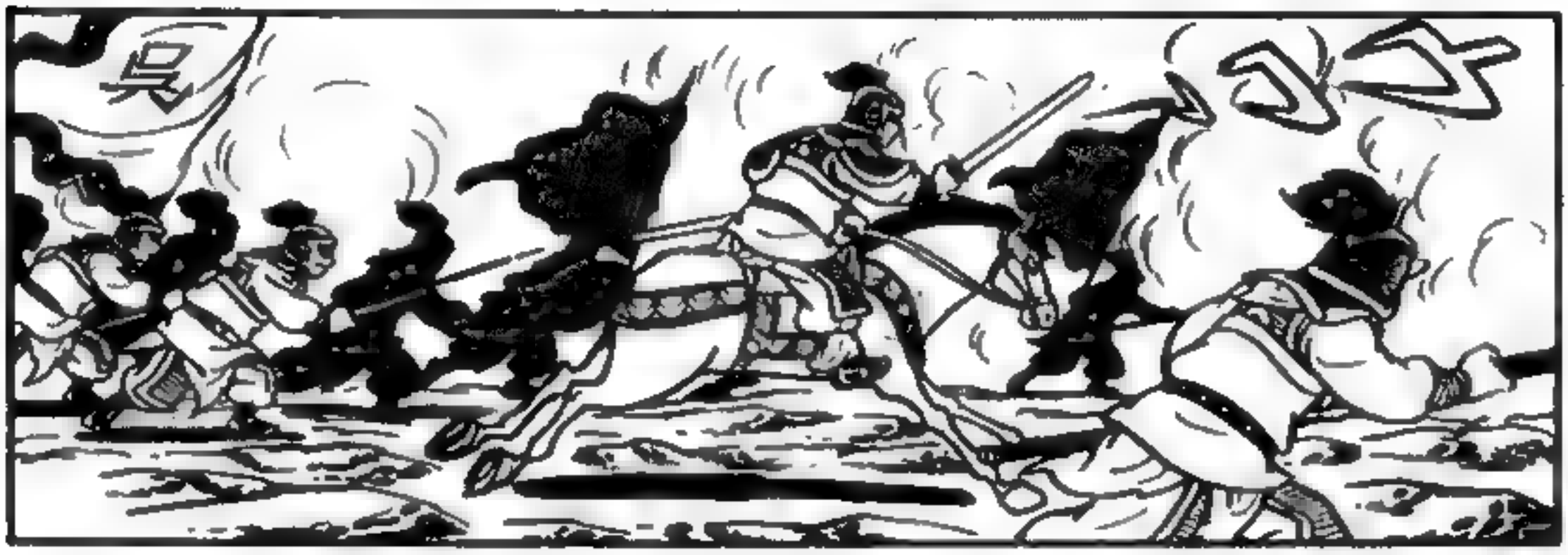
MY LORD, THE TIDE OF BATTLE IS TURNING AGAINST US. IT IS NOT SAFE FOR YOU TO STAY HERE ANY LONGER.


I WON'T LET YOU ESCAPE!




PROTECT OUR LORD!

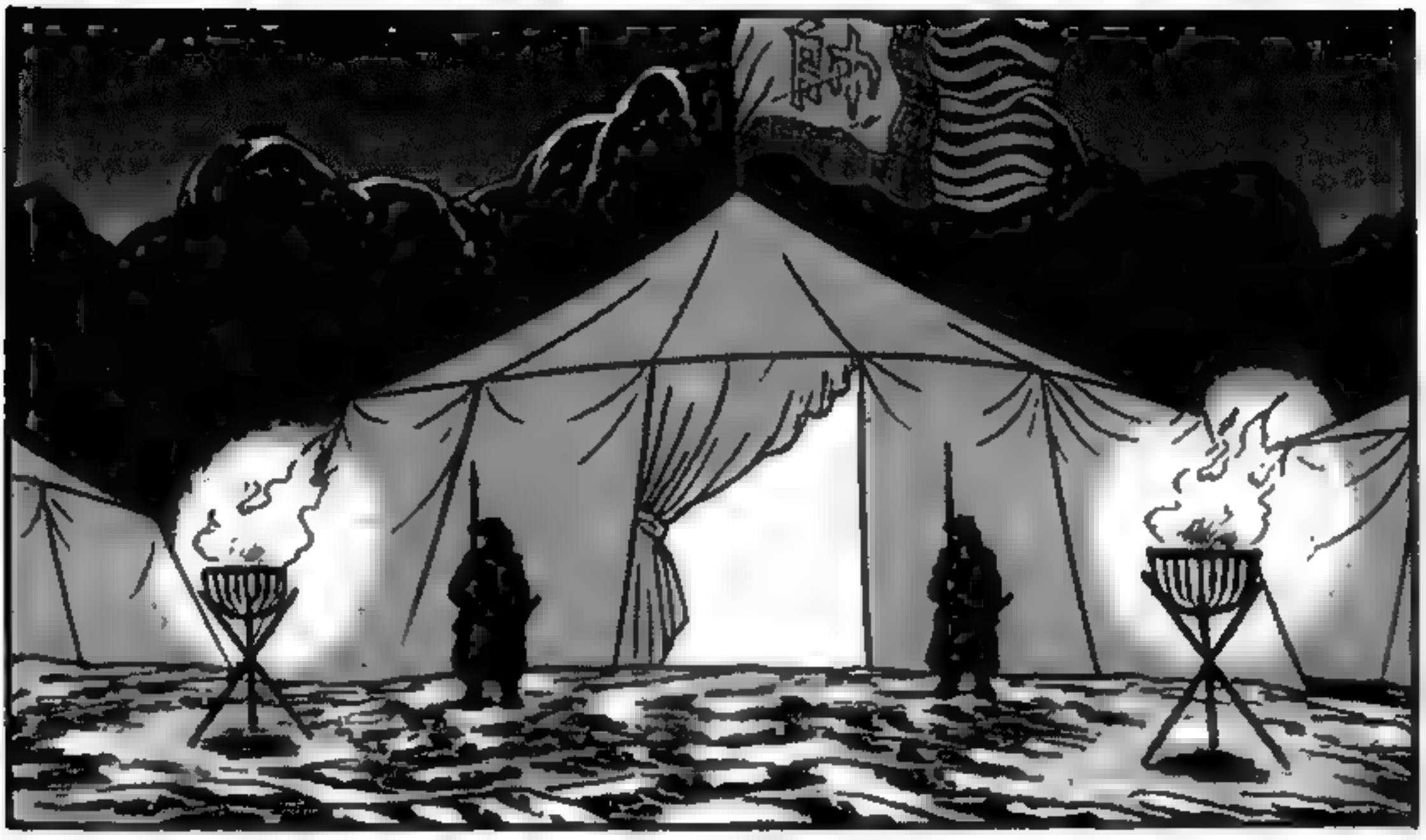

AGHH!

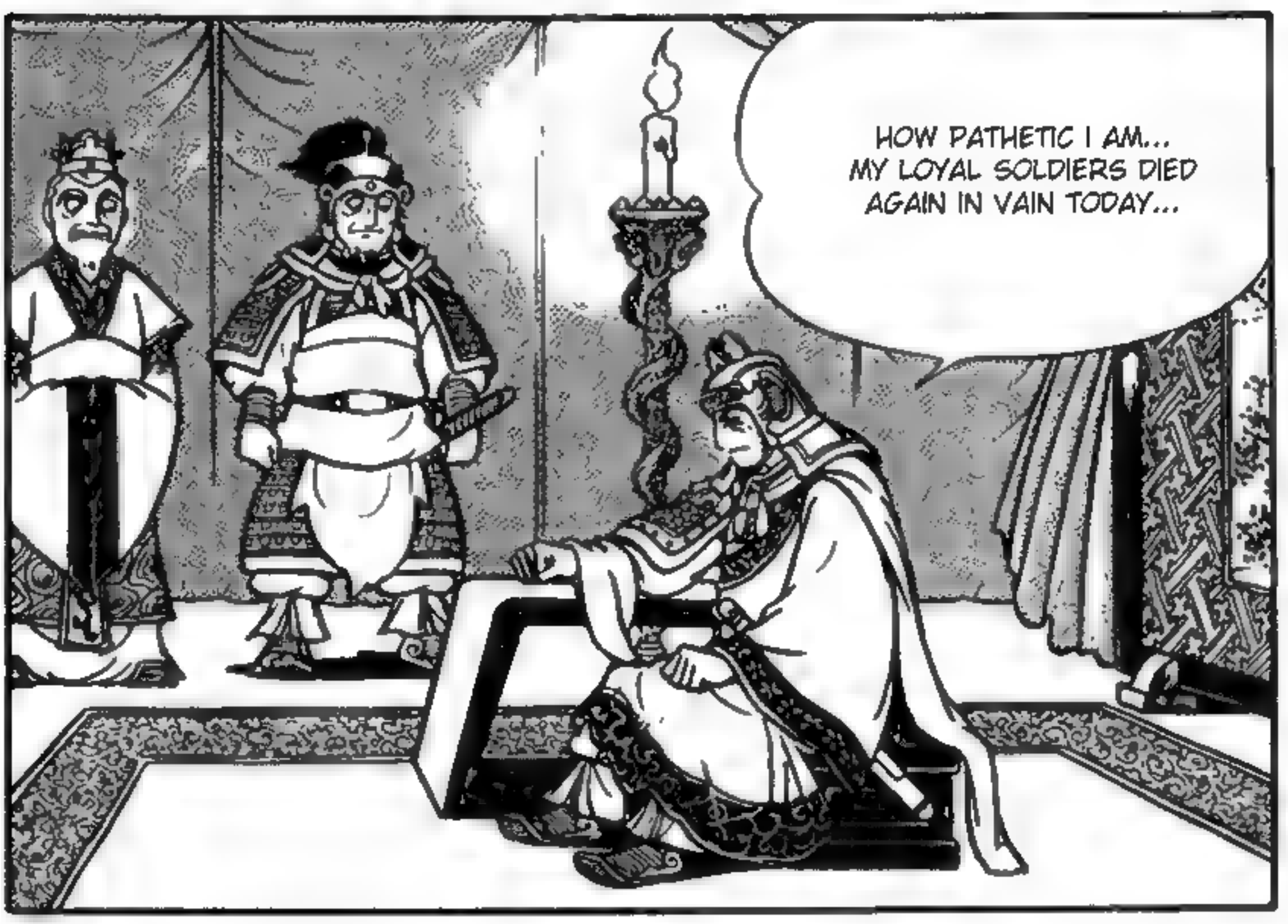


GET OUT OF MY WAY, YOU SMALL FRIES!

AT THE END OF THE DAY, THIS BATTLE TOO, BROUGHT NOTHING FOR WU EXCEPT MORE CASUALTIES

TAISHI CI'S END





YOU ARE STILL YOUNG AND PRONE TO ACTING RASHLY. DO NOT CONFUSE YOUR DUTIES AS A LORD WITH THAT OF A GENERAL. HEREAFTER, YOU MUST LEARN TO BE MORE CAUTIOUS TOWARDS YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY.

MY LORD, WITH EVERY FAILURE, THERE IS A LESSON TO BE LEARNED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORDS OF WISDOM, ZHANG HONG.

AH, TAISHI CI. WHAT IS IT?

MY LORD, I HAVE SOMETHING TO REPORT.

DURING YESTERDAY'S BATTLE, I HAD ONE OF MY UNDERLINGS BY THE NAME OF GE DING HIDE AMONGST THE ENEMIES AND INFILTRATE HEFEI.

IF MY LORD WILL GIVE ME 5000 MEN, I SHALL STORM INSIDE HEFEI AND TAKE ZHANG LIAO'S HEAD ONCE AND FOR ALL TONIGHT.

OH?

IT ALSO HAPPENS THAT HIS YOUNGER BROTHER IS A STABLEMAN EMPLOYED BY ZHANG LIAO. DUE TO A RECENT UNFAIR PUNISHMENT HE RECEIVED, THIS YOUNGER BROTHER HAS AGREED TO WORK WITH GE DING TO START FIRES INSIDE HEFEI AND OPEN THE CITY GATES.

THANK YOU, SIR.

I SHALL GRANT YOUR REQUEST. I BID YOU GOOD LUCK, TAISHI CI.



SO WHEN EVERYONE FALLS INTO DEEP SLEEP, WE'LL LIGHT THE FIRES AND YELL, "REVOLT! REVOLT!"

'COURSE. GENERAL TAISHI CI IS PROBABLY ALREADY WAITING VERY CLOSE OUTSIDE THE WALLS RIGHT NOW.

SO YOU'RE SURE EVERYTHING'S ALL SET FOR THE PLAN TONIGHT, BROTHER?

YES, BRO-THER.

IF WE CAN JUST PULL THIS OFF, WE CAN LIVE RICH FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!

A PERFECT PLAN!

AND ONCE EVERYONE'S PANICKING, THAT'S WHEN WE'LL OPEN THE CITY GATES!

I'M AFRAID NOT.

GENERAL, AFTER THE HARD-FOUGHT VICTORY YESTERDAY, HOW ABOUT WE CELEBRATE WITH A DRINK TONIGHT?

YES, SIR.

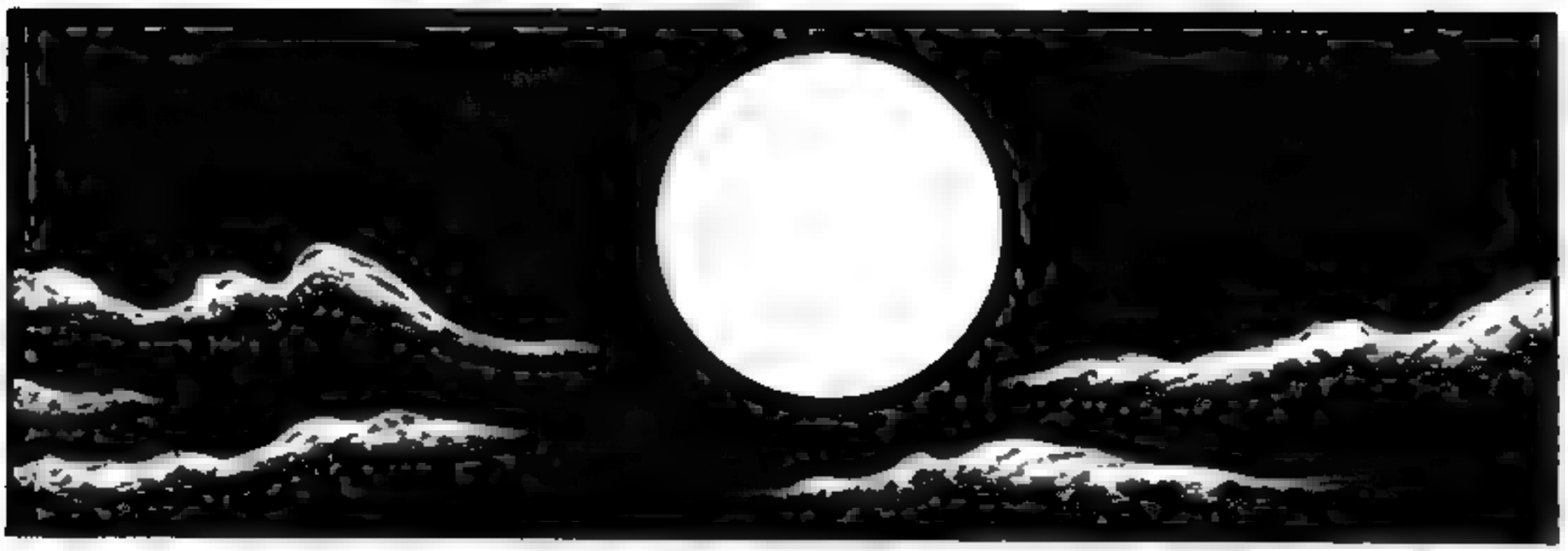
DO NOT LET YOUR GUARDS DOWN AND MAKE SURE TO CARRY OUT YOUR NIGHT PATROL DUTIES.

IN WAR, YOU MUST NOT REJOICE OVER ONE DAY'S VICTORY FOR IT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE FOLLOWED BY DEFEAT THE NEXT DAY.

NOT GOOD... THE MEN HAVE ALREADY BECOME DRUNK ON VICTORY... I MUST CORRECT THEIR ATTITUDES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF WE'RE TO WITHSTAND THIS SIEGE.

A LITTLE CELEBRATION AFTER A VICTORY LIKE YESTERDAY'S COULD REALLY HELP THE MEN BLOW OFF SOME STRESS AND IMPROVE MORALE...

DAMN, HE'S A REAL HARD-ASS, ISN'T HE?



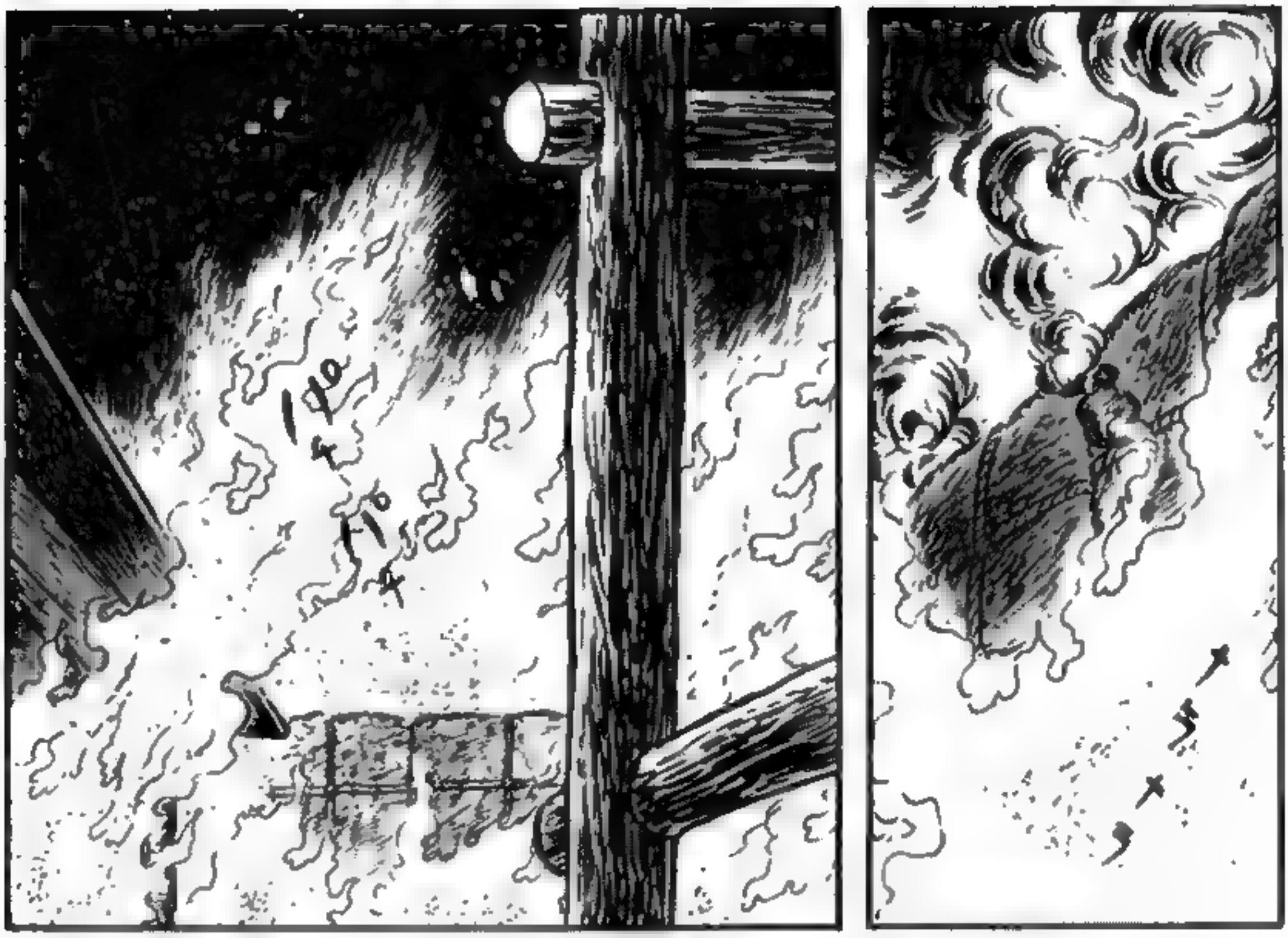


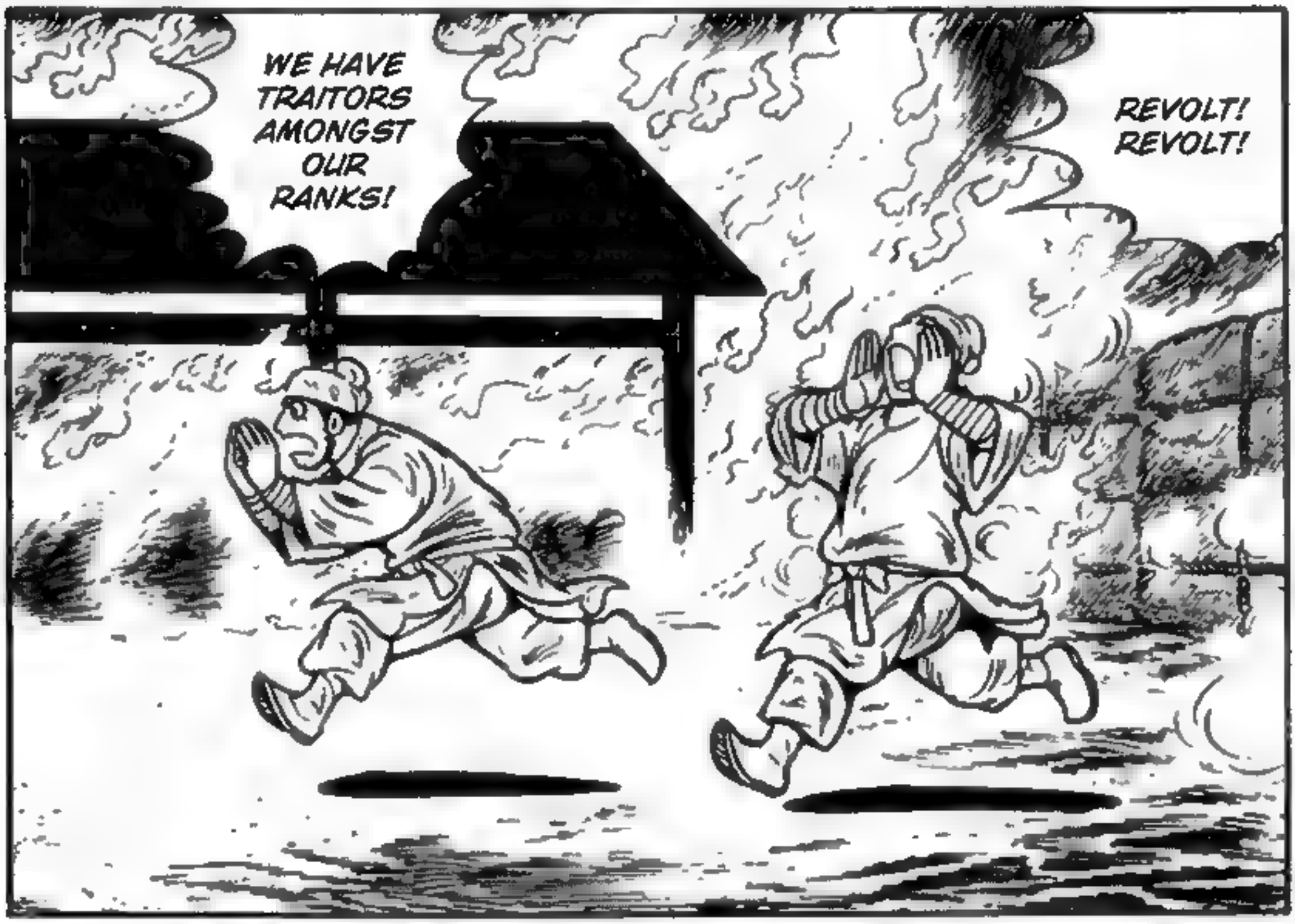

GOT IT.
JUST STICK TO THE PLAN, GOT IT?










WE HAVE TRAITORS AMONGST OUR RANKS!
REVOLT! REVOLT!

AHHH!

APPARENTLY SOME OF OUR OWN MEN HAVE TURNED AGAINST US!

I HEAR IT'S A REVOLT!

BRING ME MY ARMOUR!

I WAS NOT YET ASLEEP AND HEARD HOW THIS WHOLE CHAOS STARTED. THERE WERE INITIALLY ONLY TWO DISTINCT VOICES YELLING REVOLT AND TRAITORS.

DON'T PANIC!

GENERAL! SOME OF OUR MEN HAVE TURNED AGAINST US AND HAVE STARTED FIRES!

THIS IS A PLOY TO THROW THE REST OF OUR ARMY INTO PANIC. CALM THE SOLDIERS DOWN IMMEDIATELY.

YES, SIR.

EXECUTE ANYBODY WHO CONTINUES TO YELL AND CAUSE FURTHER PANIC.

TRY AS YOU MIGHT, BUT AS LONG AS WE DON'T PANIC, YOUR LITTLE PLOY WILL FAIL...

IT'S QUITE LIKELY THEY'RE COORDI-NATING WITH THE ENEMIES OUTSIDE.

WAIT A MINUTE...

WHAT IS IT, LI DIAN?

ZHANG LIAO!

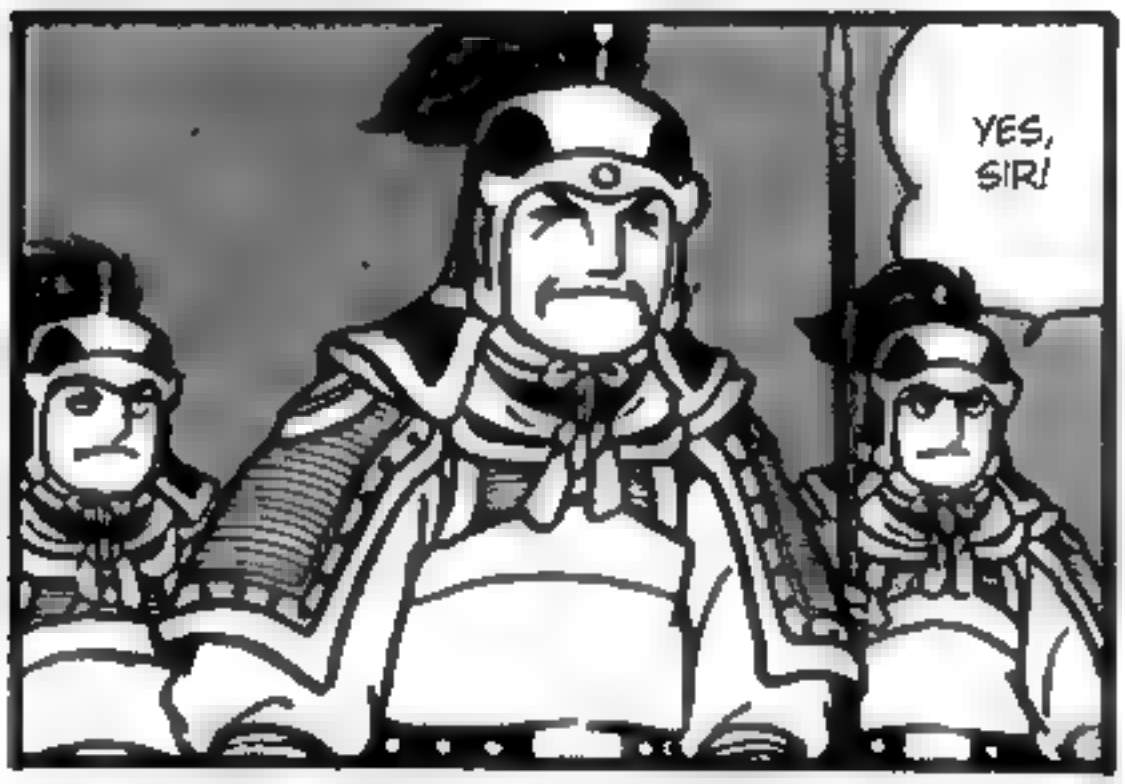

JUST AS I SUS-PECTED.


WE CAUGHT TWO MEN TRYING TO LIGHT THE STORAGE ON FIRE.


THESE ARE THE TWO.



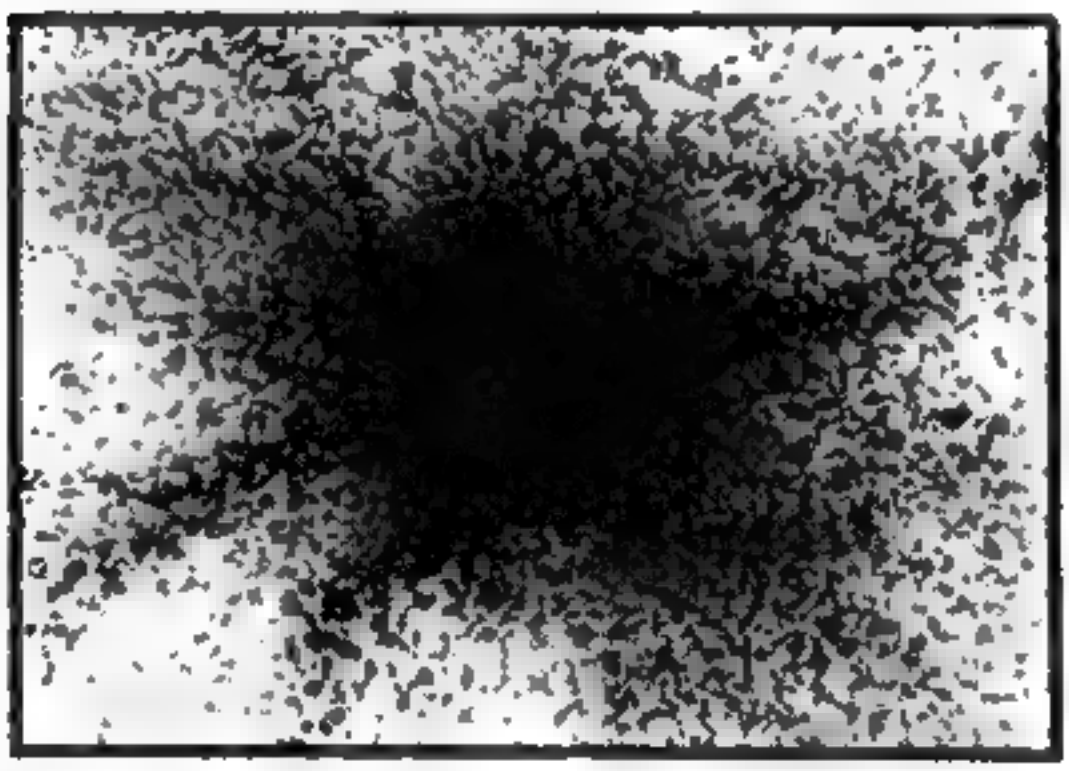


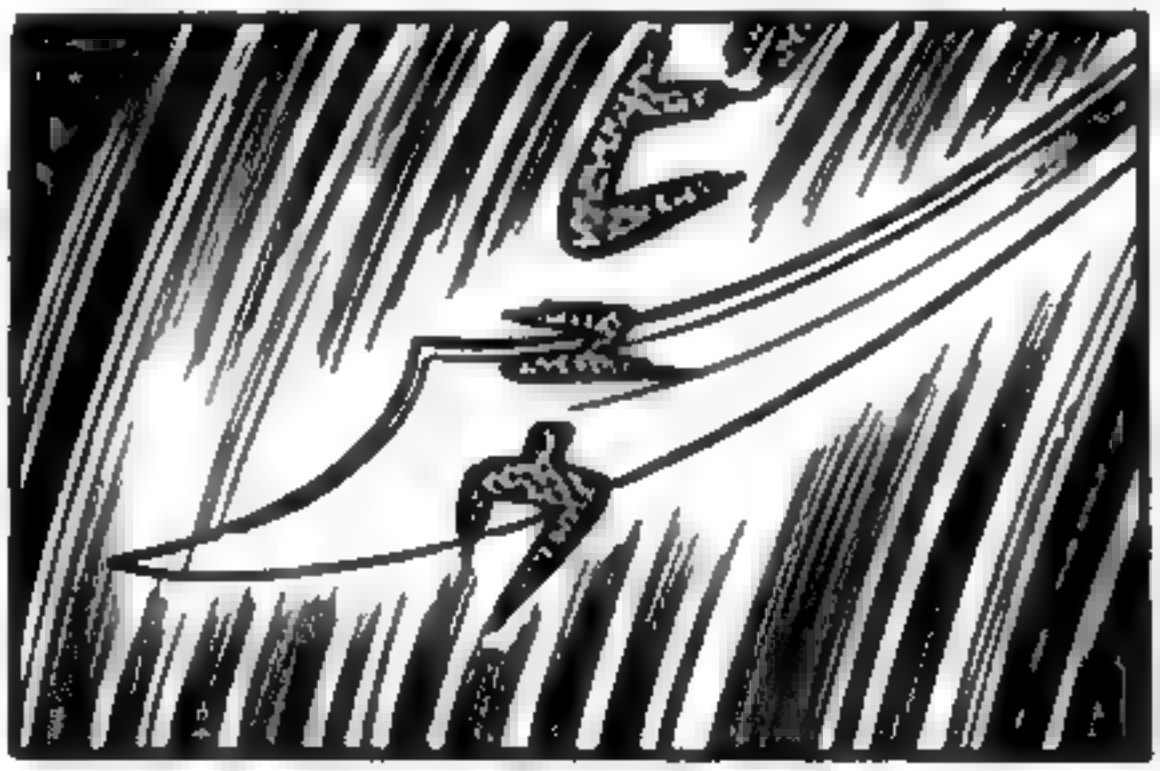

YES, SIR!


OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!










?
GO DEPLOY OUR SOLDIERS TO THE WESTERN GATE.


WHAT IS THE MEANING BEHIND THESE ORDERS?


THERE, HAVE THE MEN YELL "REVOLT!" WHILE OPENING THE CITY GATES.


UNDERSTOOD. I'LL DEPLOY OUR TROOPS AT ONCE.


I'M CERTAIN THOSE TWO SPIES WERE TRYING TO COORDINATE A SURPRISE ATTACK BY OPENING THE CITY GATES. THE ENEMIES MUST ALREADY BE WAITING CLOSE BY OUTSIDE.



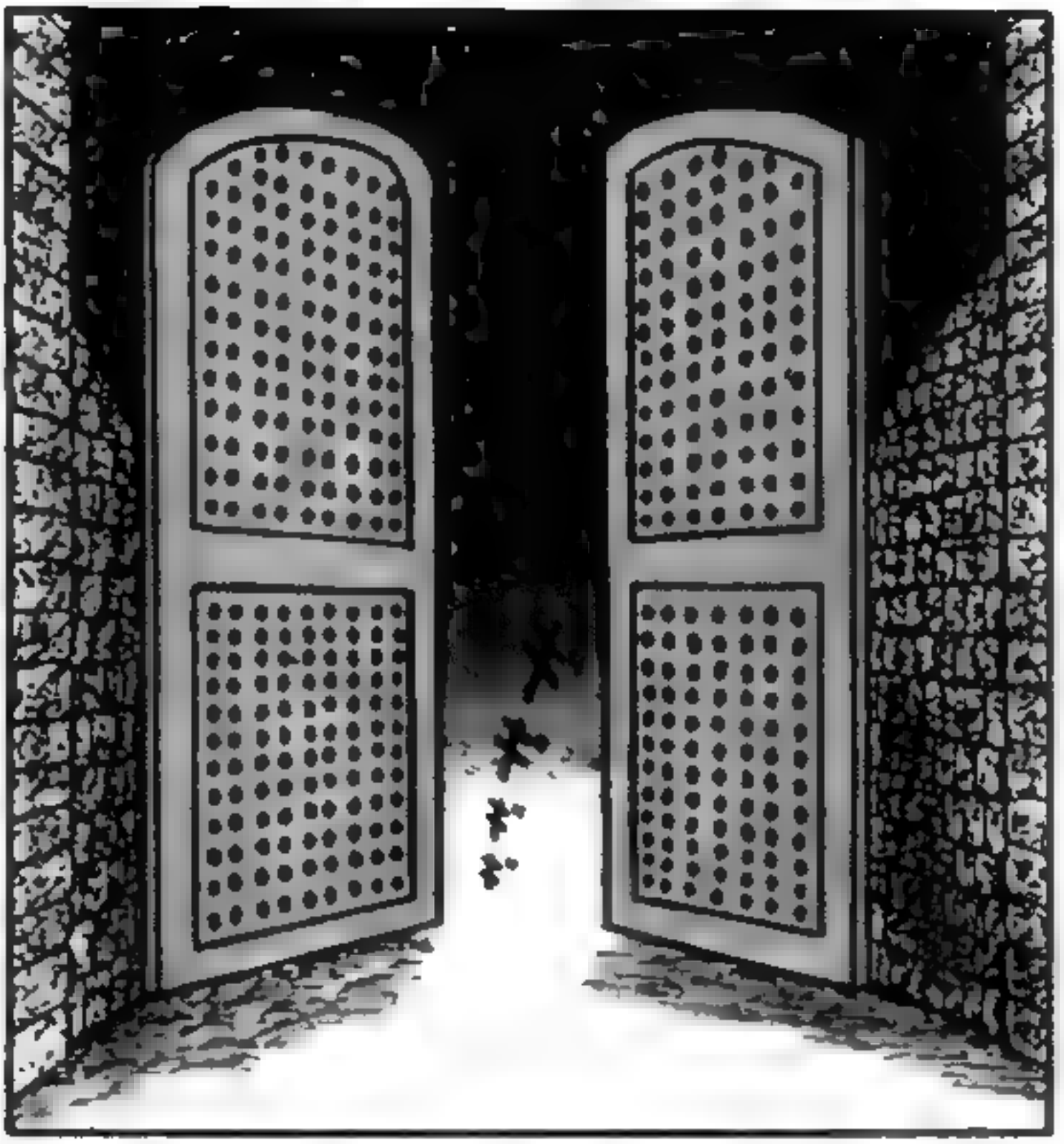
AHH! THE CITY GATES ARE OPENING!

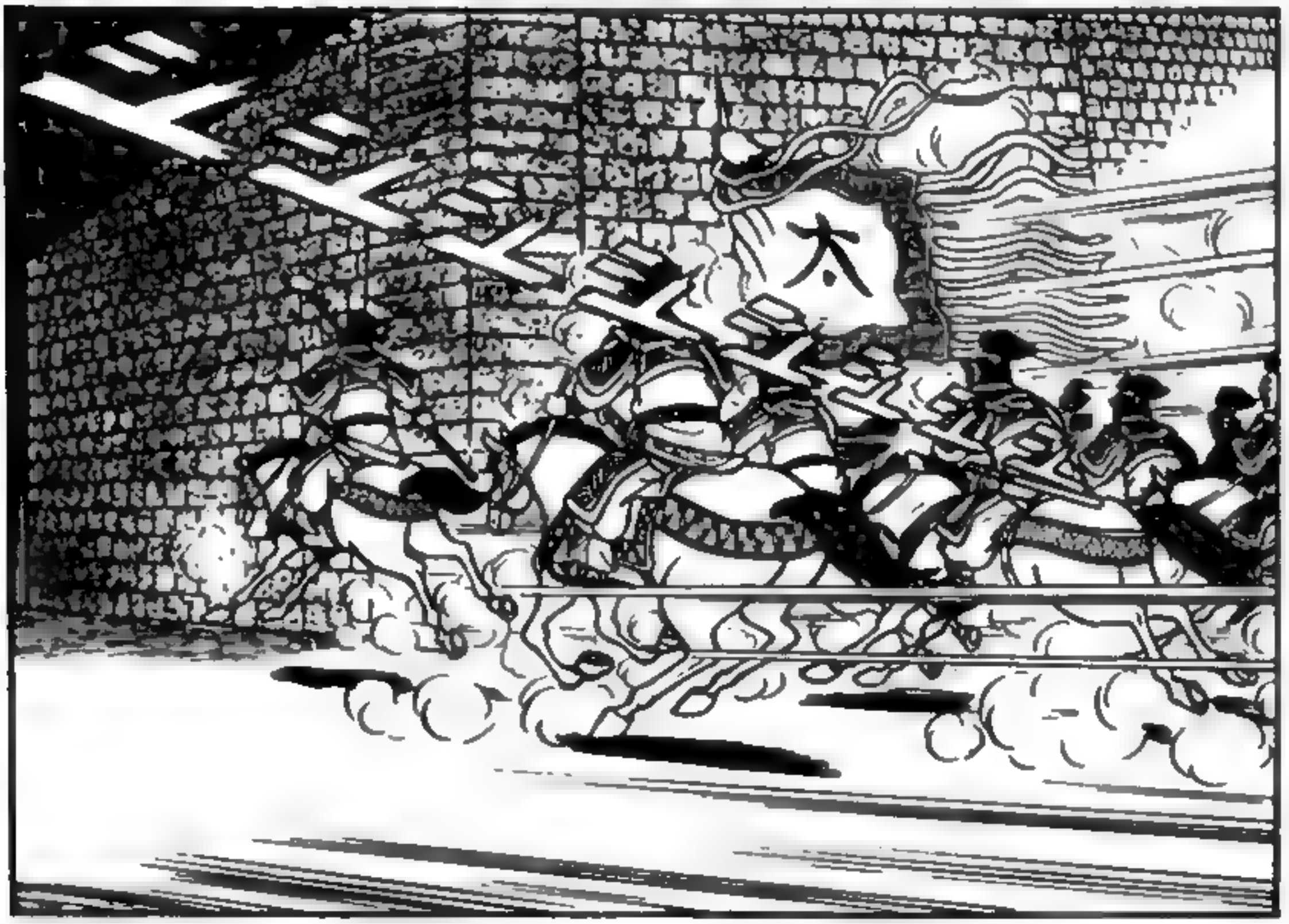
GOOD, GOOD...

SIR, I CAN SEE SMOKE RISING FROM INSIDE HEFEI.

OHH!


LET'S STORM INSIDE, MEN!



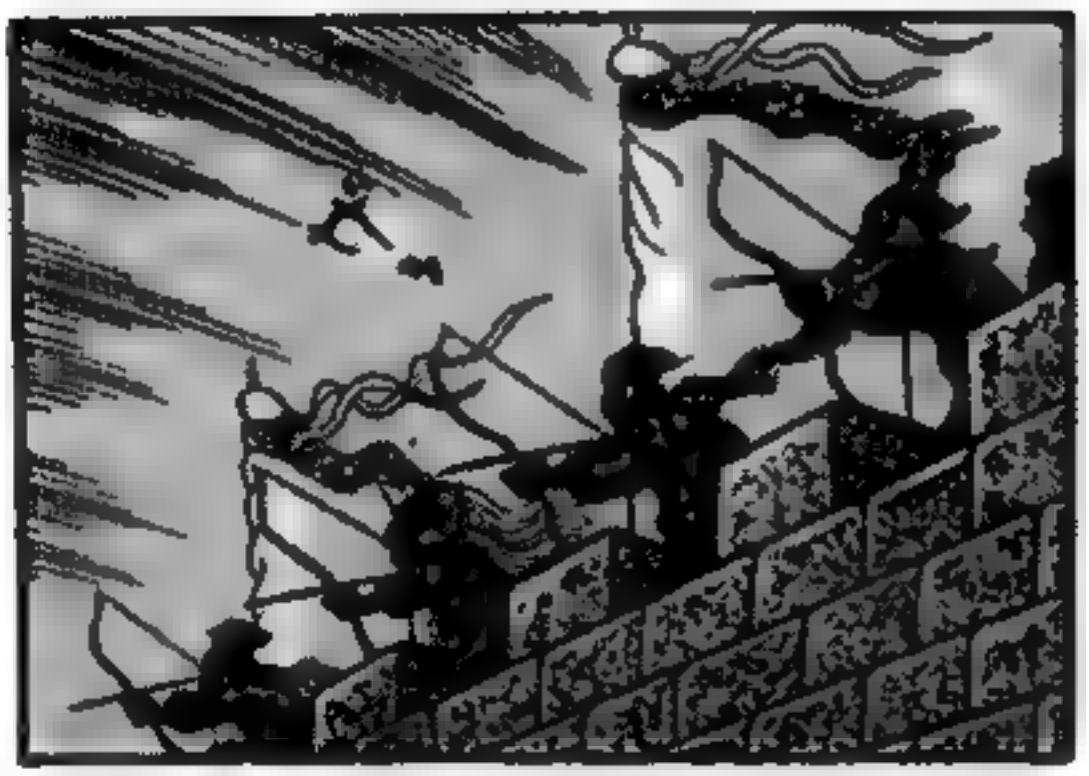


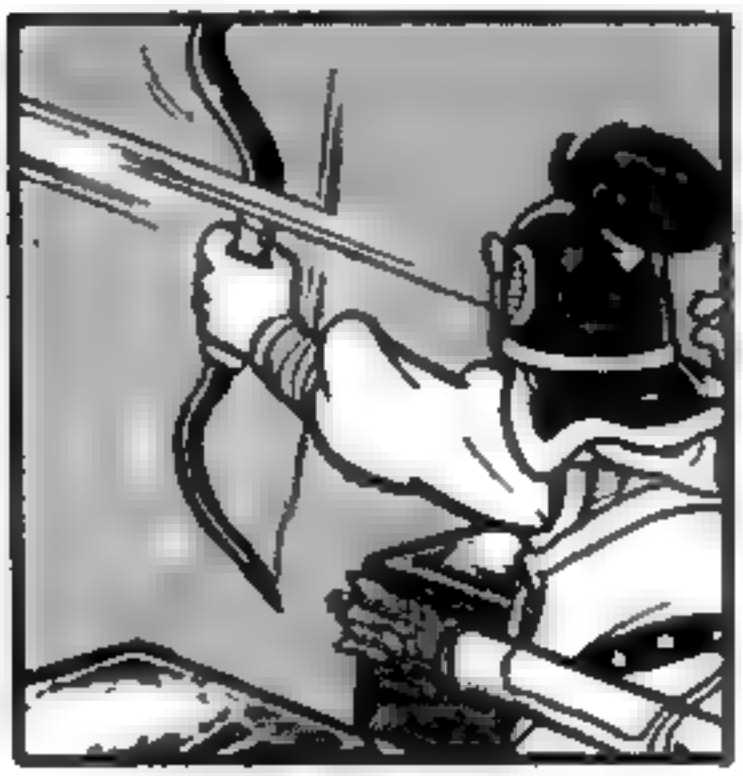




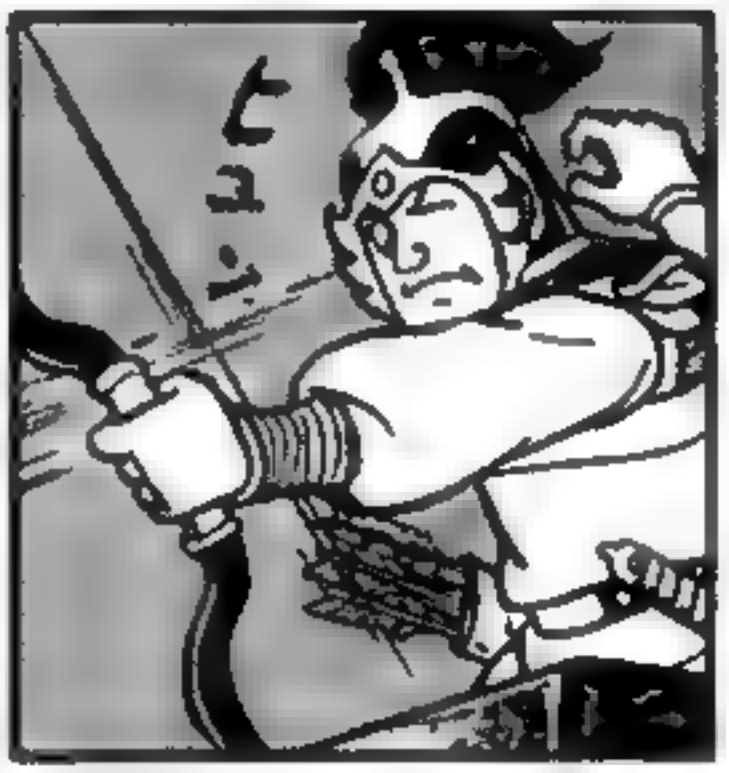

NOW!



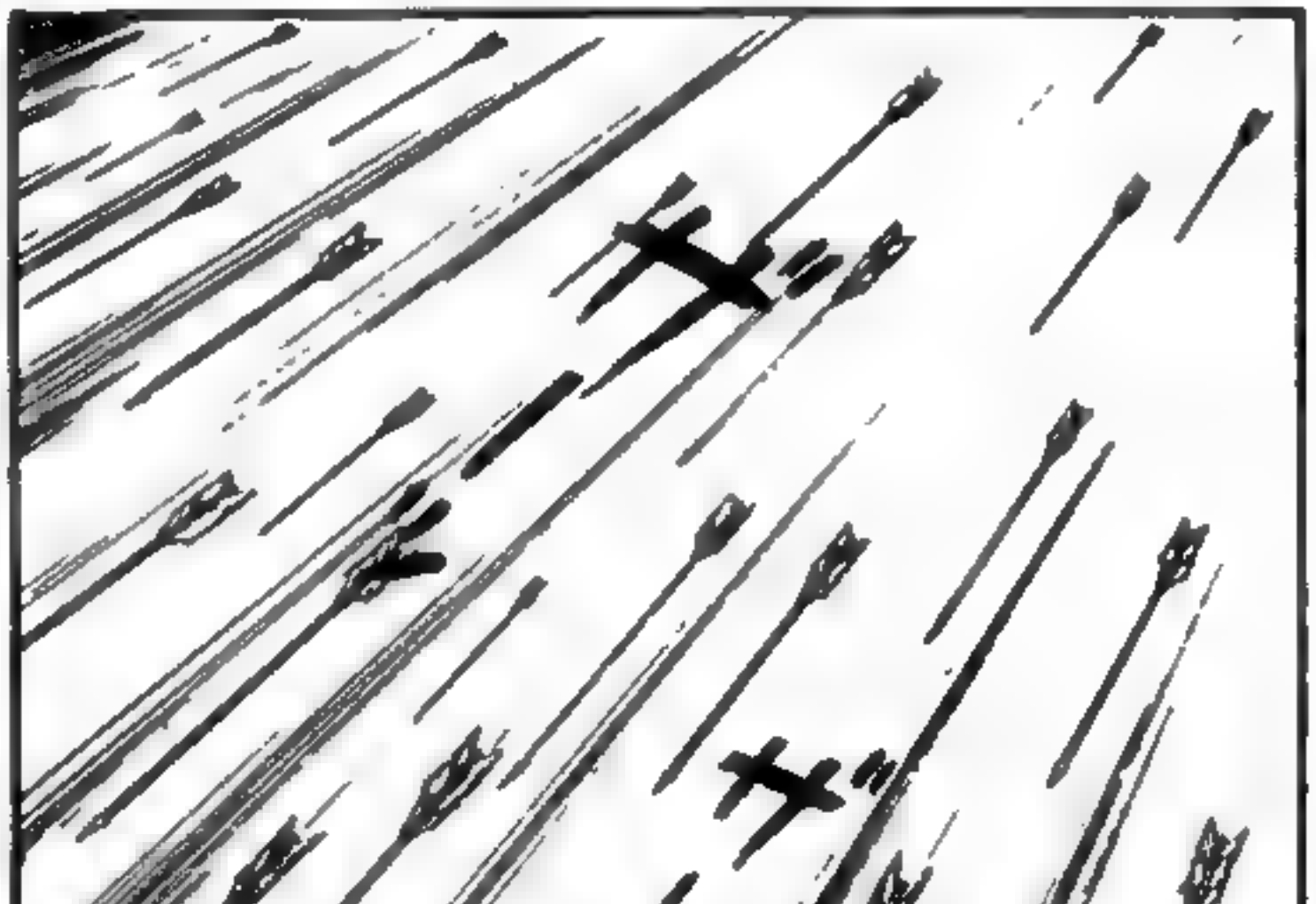






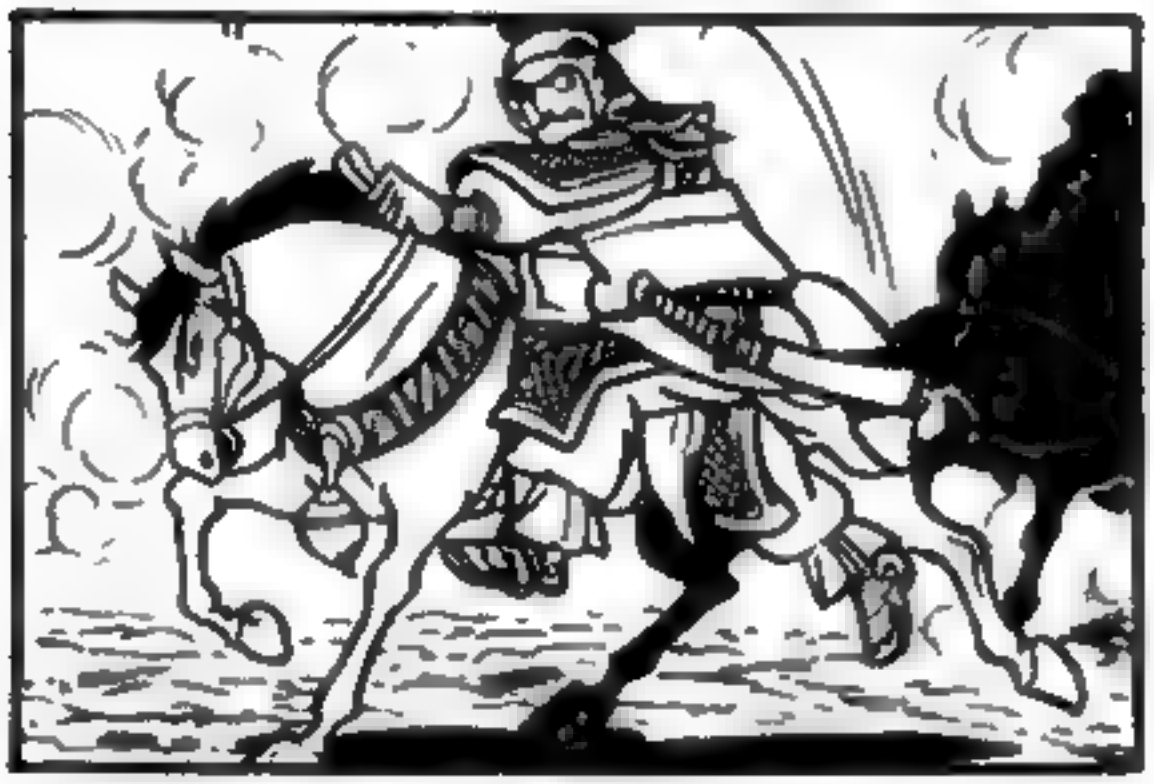



AGHH!



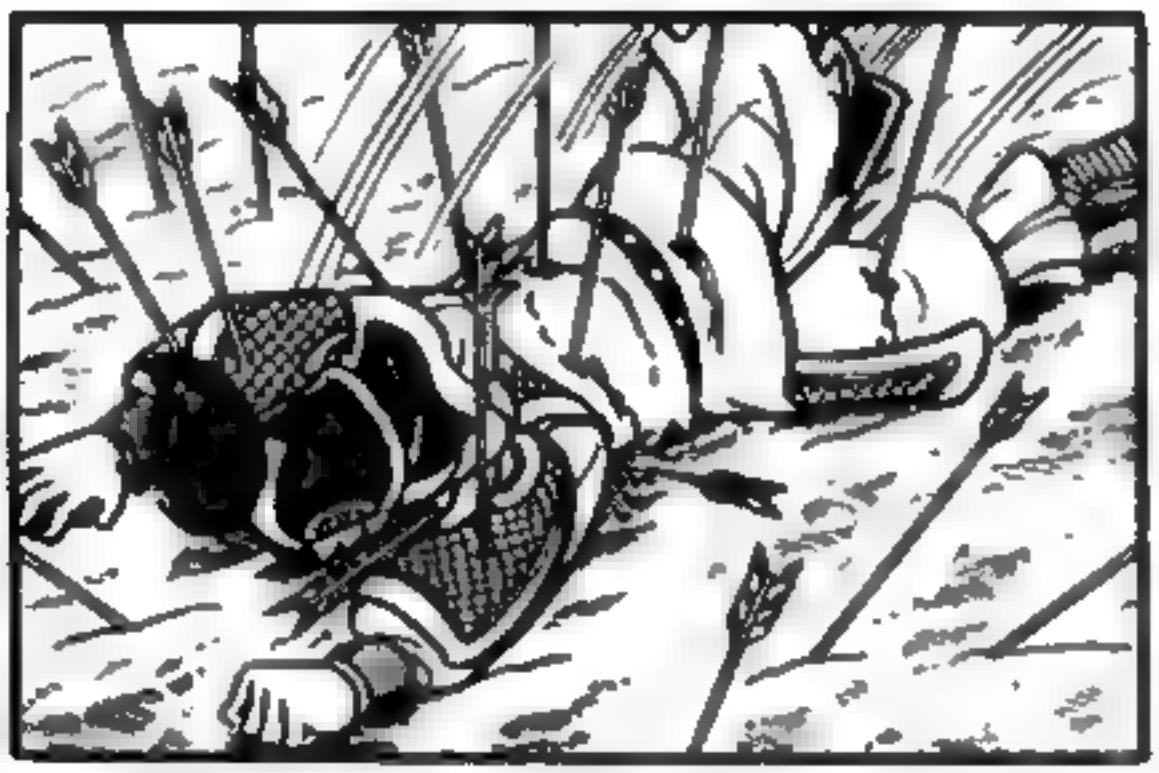



GAHH!




GENERAL!

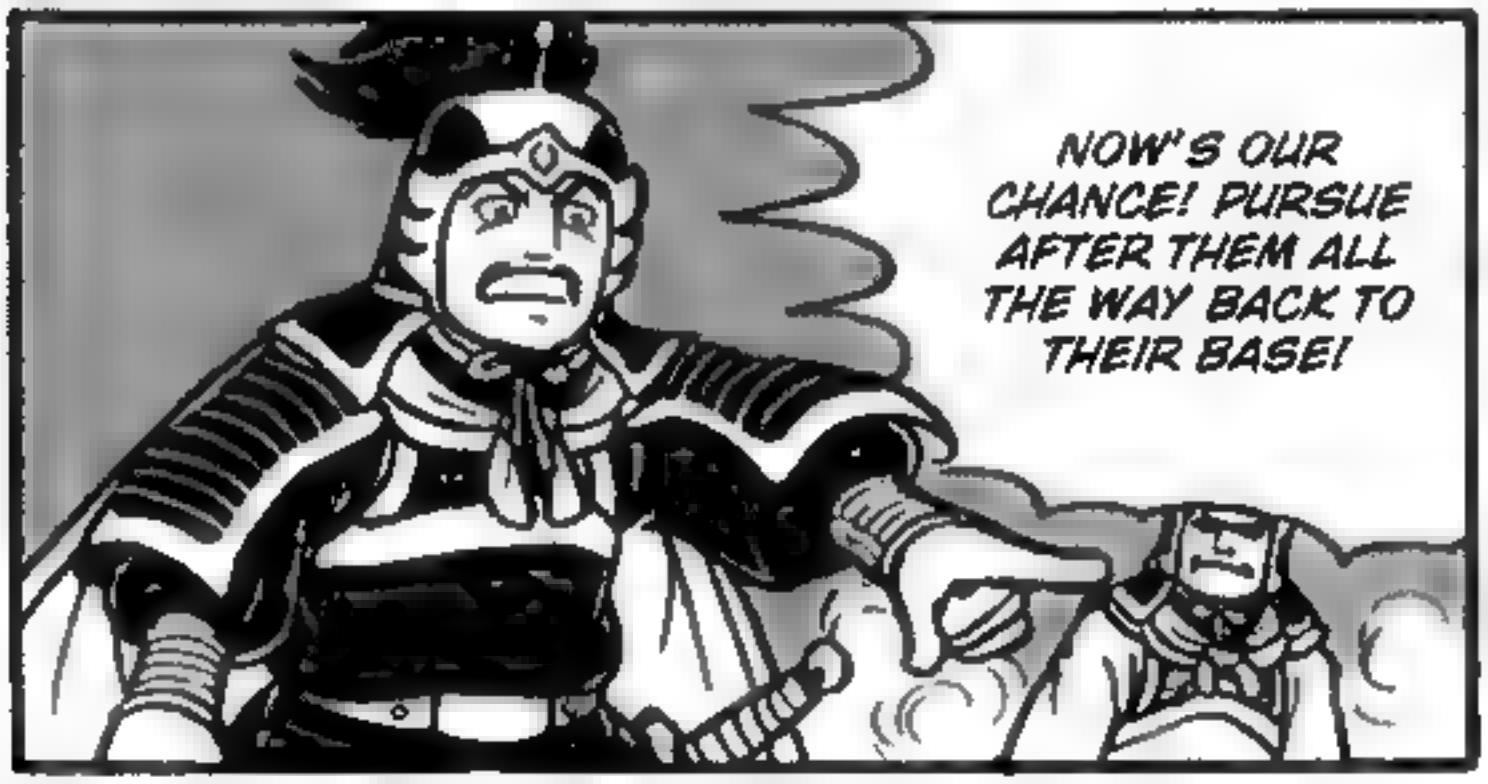

GENERAL
TAISHI CI!




AGHH!


AHH!


RETREAT!
RETREAT!


NOW'S OUR CHANCE! PURSUE AFTER THEM ALL THE WAY BACK TO THEIR BASE!








HM?


HUH?


WHAT HAPP-ENED?

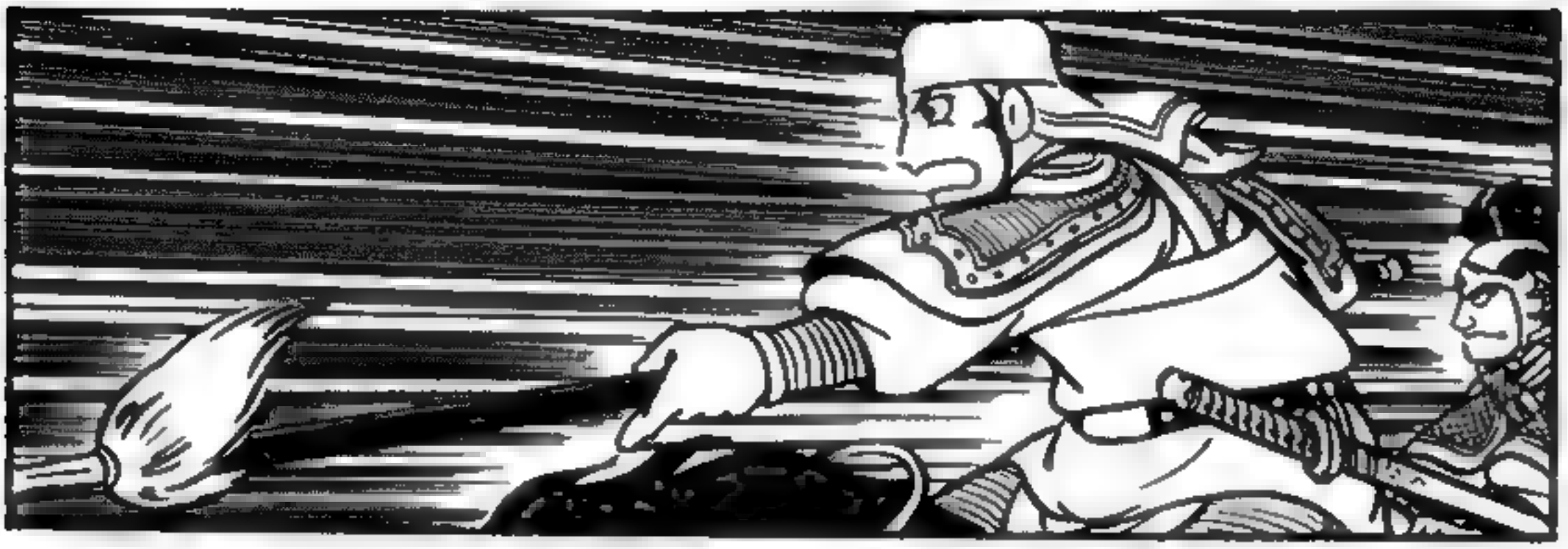

HMM...
THOSE LOOK LIKE OUR COMRADES, CAPTAIN.

WHAT!?

G-GENERAL TAISHI CI HAS FALLEN AND OUR PLAN HAS FAILED...

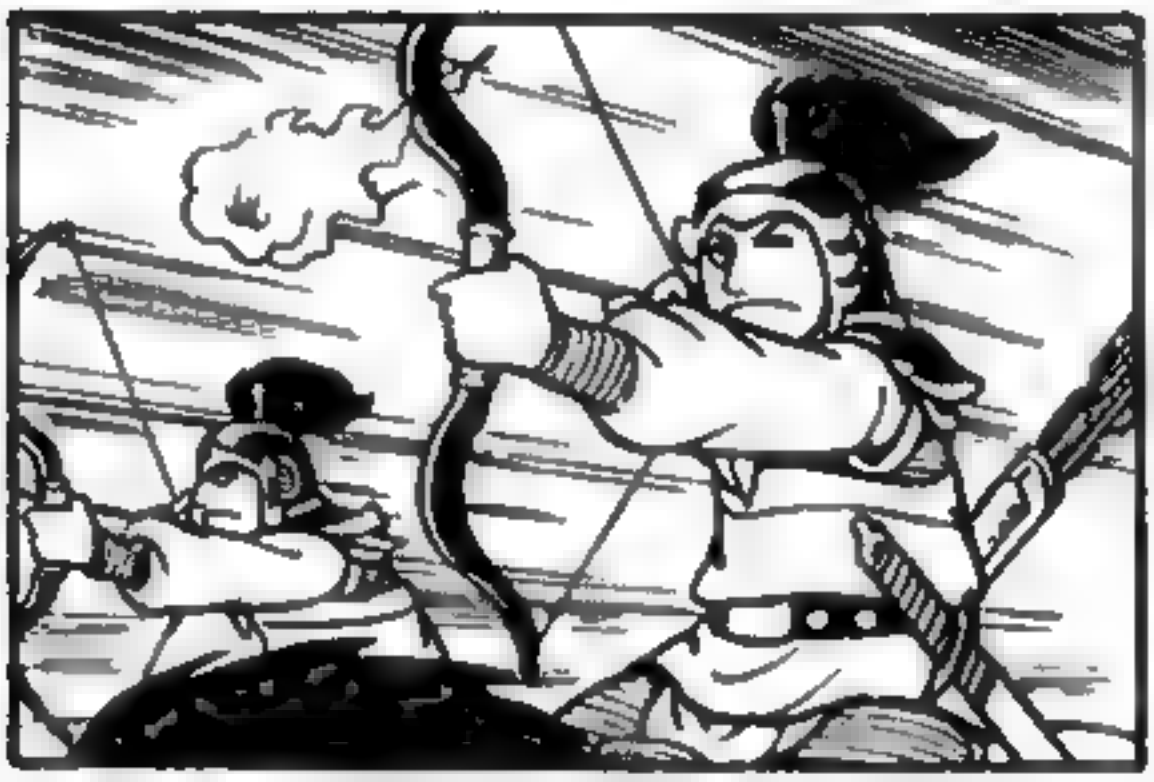
ENEMY ATTACK!

AHH!

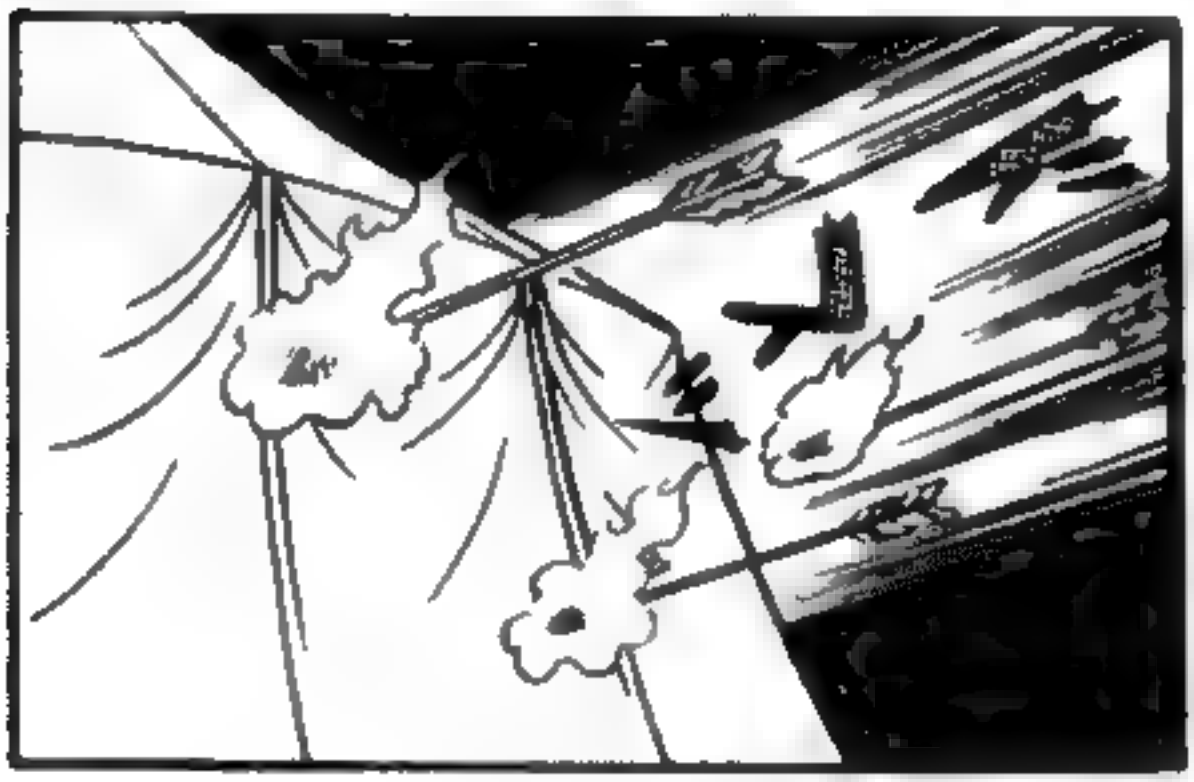


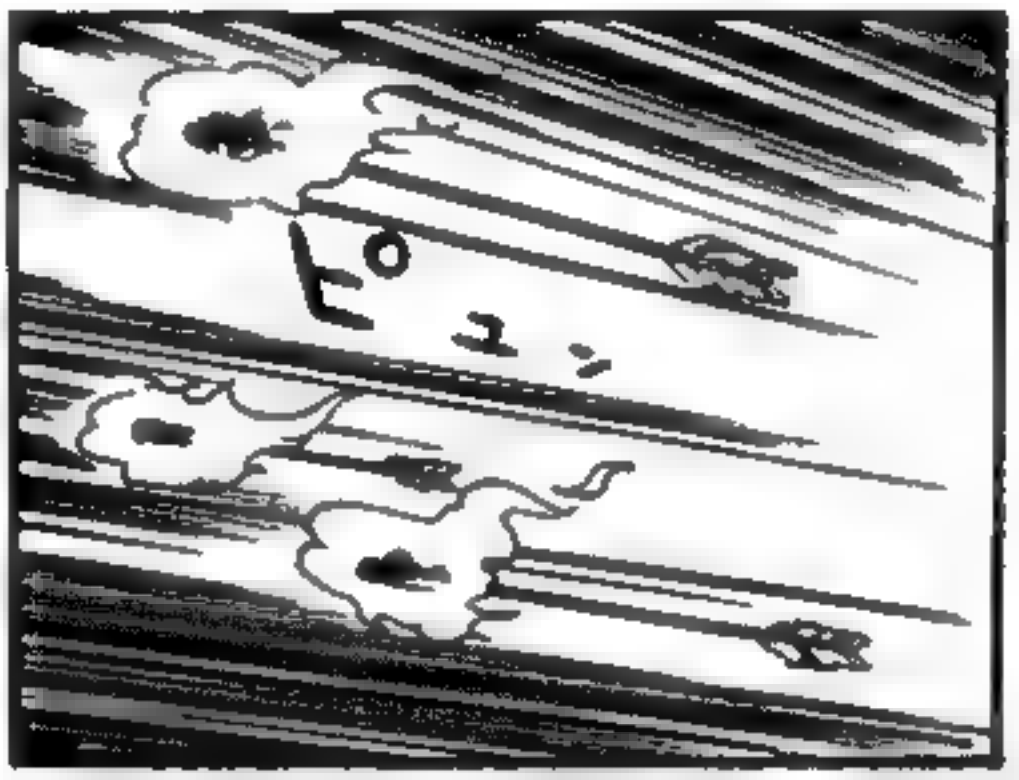






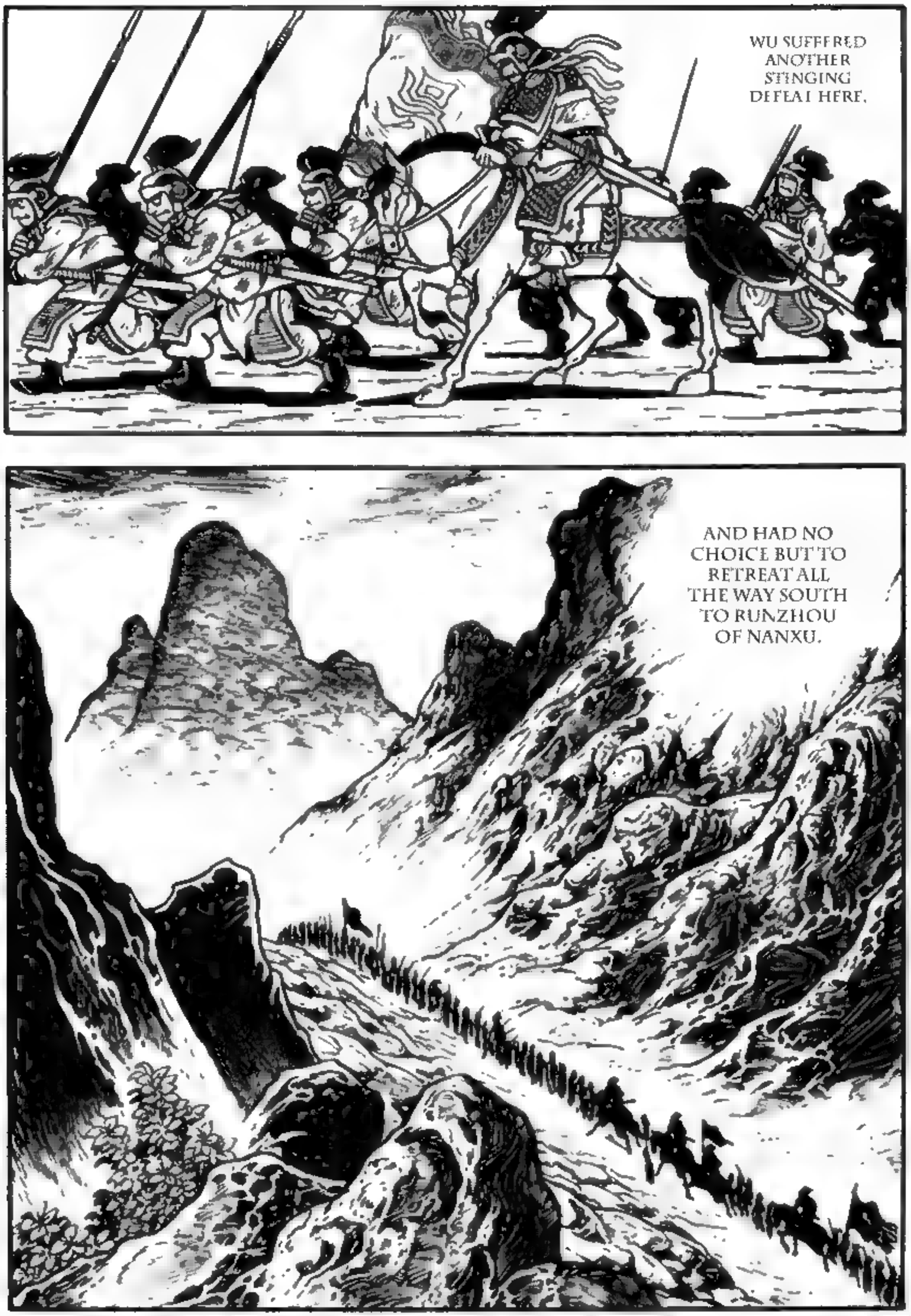






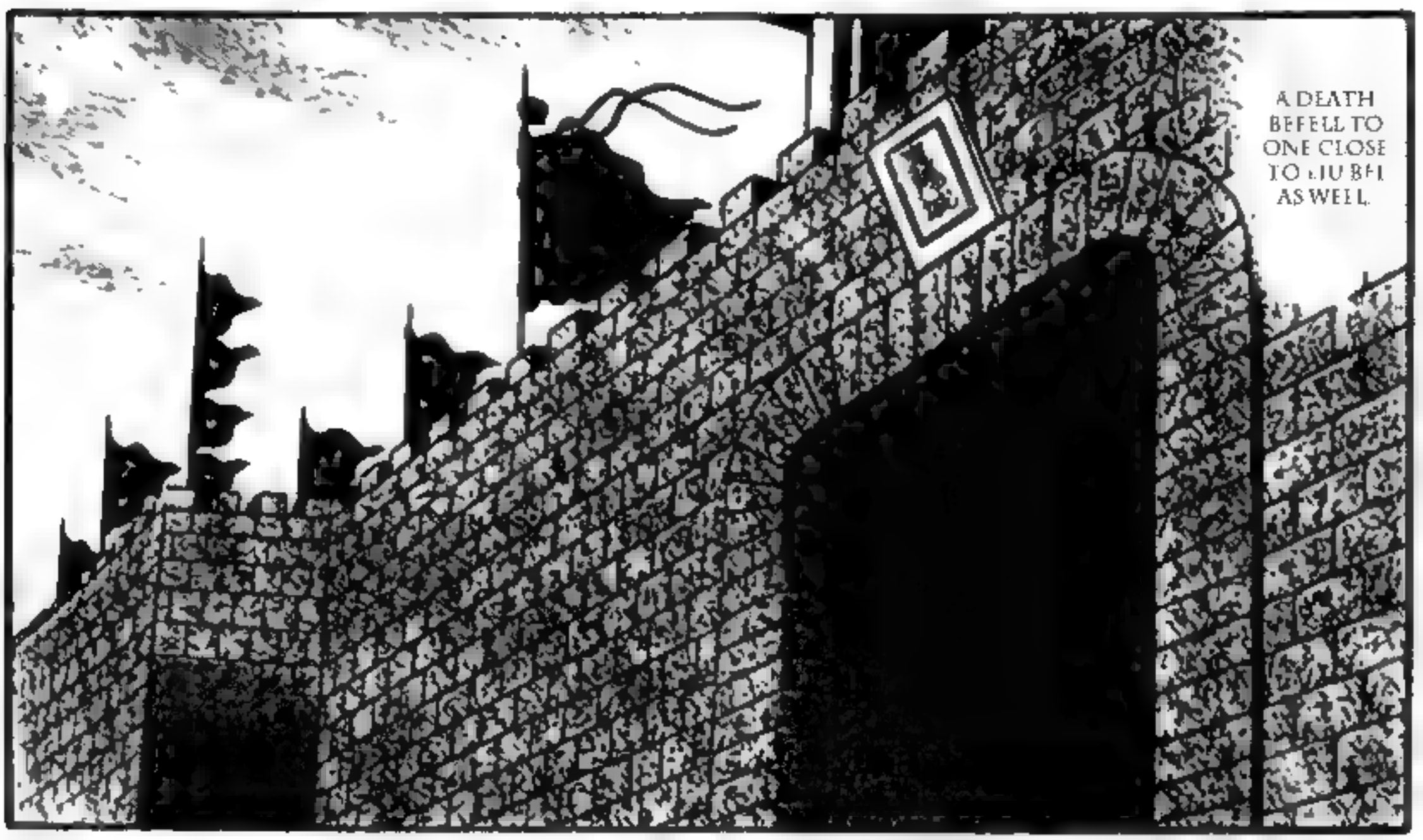


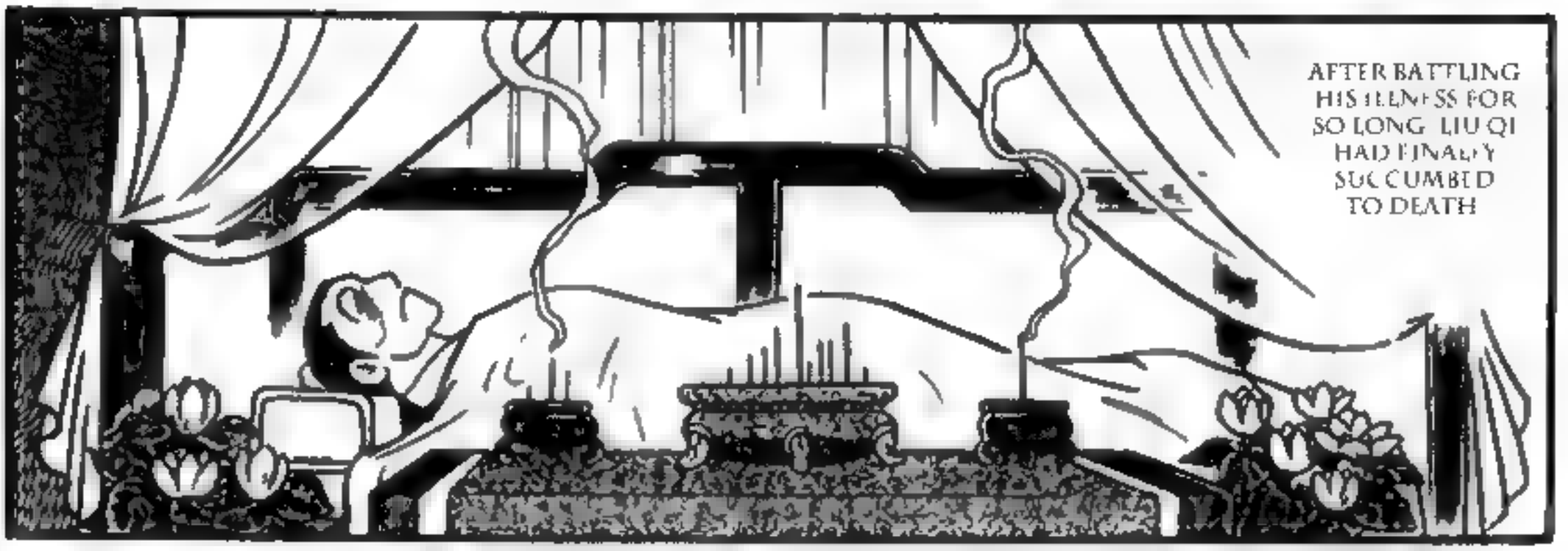



WU SUFFERED ANOTHER STINGING DEFEAT HERE,
AND HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RETREAT ALL THE WAY SOUTH TO RUNZHOU OF NANXU.

PROMISSORY NOTE







RIGHTLY SPOKEN, MY LORD. THEY'LL BE SURE TO COME KNOCKING ON OUR DOOR IMMEDIATELY.

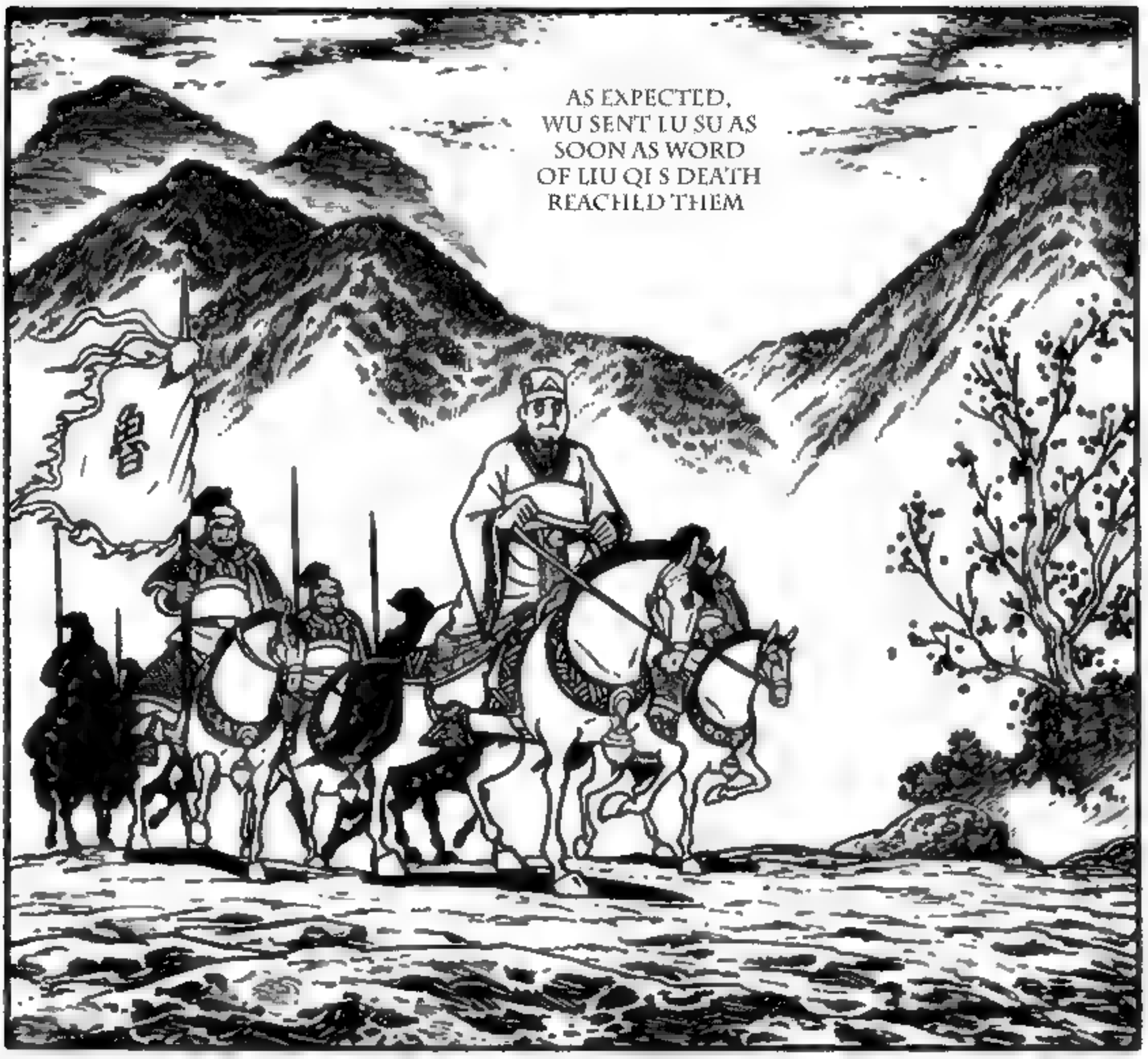
AS TRAGIC AS THIS IS, I'M AFRAID WU SHAN'T SIT QUIET FOR WE PROMISED TO RETURN JINGZHOU'S COMMANDERIES ONCE LIU QI PASSED AWAY.

WORRY NOT, MY LORD. I'VE ALREADY THOUGHT UP OF A PLAN.

AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN THAT TIME COMES?

YES, GOOD IDEA.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE MUST SECURE OUR TERRITORY FOR THE TIME BEING. PLEASE SEND GUAN YU TO DEFEND XIANGYANG.


AS EXPECTED,
WU SENT LU SU AS
SOON AS WORD
OF LIU QI S DEATH
REACHED THEM


THE
PURPORTED
REASON FOR
HIS VISIT
WAS TO
MOURN
LIU QI'S
PASSING.

BUT TO NO ONE'S SURPRISE, HE BROUGHT UP THE REAL REASON FOR HIS VISIT DURING THE BANQUET

BUT NOW THAT LIU QI HAS PASSED AWAY, IS IT NOT TIME YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE BY RETURNING JINGZHOU TO WU?

THE LAST TIME I VISITED, YOU TOLD ME THAT JINGZHOU'S LANDS RIGHTFULLY BELONGED TO LIU QI ALONE AND THAT YOU WERE MERELY ASSISTING HIM IN GOVERNANCE.

ANOTHER TIME? WHEN MIGHT THAT BE?

COULD WE PERHAPS CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION ANOTHER TIME?

OF COURSE, OF COURSE. ALL I'D LIKE TO KNOW IS WHEN EXACTLY WE CAN DISCUSS THIS MATTER, HOWEVER.

IT'S JUST THAT, THIS IS A FUNERAL BANQUET SO DISCUSSING MATTERS OF THE STATE WOULD BE RATHER INAPPROPRIATE...

HAVE YOU NO MANNERS, LU SU?

AS PER THE PROPER MOURNING RITUALS, MY LORD GRACIOUSLY RECEIVES YOU AS A GUEST AND WISHES TO AVOID DISRESPECTFUL TOPICS OF CONVERSATION. I, HOWEVER, AM NOT AS POLITE AS MY LORD AND FEEL COMPELLED TO TALK IF YOU SO WISH TO PRESS THIS MATTER FURTHER.

YES, BUT YOU-

LET ME FINISH!

NOT ONLY IS MY LORD RELATED BY BLOOD TO JINGZHOU'S FORMER GOVERNOR LIU BIAO, BUT HE IS ALSO A DESCENDANT OF THE IMPERIAL EMPEROR JING OF HAN. THEREFORE, IT IS NOT OUT OF LINE EVEN IN THE SLIGHTEST BIT THAT MY LORD SHOULD INHERIT JINGZHOU'S LANDS.

I KNOW YOU WISH TO SAY THAT IT WAS WU'S SOLDIERS WHO DROVE OUT CAO CAO'S ARMY FROM JINGZHOU DURING THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS, THEREBY MAKING WU ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER.

BUT EVEN THAT IS FLAWED LOGIC, SINCE WU DID NOT SINGLE-HANDEDLY ACCOMPLISH THAT FEAT. I REMIND YOU THAT MY LORD AND HIS SOLDIERS PARTICIPATED IN THAT BATTLE AS WELL.

EVEN PUTTING ASIDE THE MATTER OF RED CLIFFS, JUST WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF YOUR LORD EXACTLY? THE SON OF A PETTY OFFICIAL FROM QIANTANG, WHO HAS RENDERED NO MERITORIOUS SERVICE WHATSOEVER TO THE IMPERIAL COURT. BUT BECAUSE OF SHEER MILITARY POWER AND THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITIES, HE NOW CALLS HIMSELF THE LORD OF 6 DISTRICTS AND 81 COUNTIES OF THE SOUTHLAND.

MOREOVER, EVEN ZHOU YU'S FIRE SHIP STRATEGY WOULD HAVE FAILED IF I HADN'T SUMMONED THE SOUTHEAST WINDS.

SO LET ME ASK YOU THIS: WHO HAS MORE RIGHT TO RULE JINGZHOU? THE DESCENDANT OF THE EMPEROR AND A BLOOD-RELATIVE OF ITS TWO FORMER LORDS, LIU BIAO AND LIU QI? OR THE SON OF A MINOR OFFICIAL WHOSE UNSATIABLE GREED CALLS HIM TO DEMAND TERRITORIES HE HAS NO REAL CLAIM TO?

.....

I ADMIT YOUR WORDS RING TRUE, KONGMING...

WELL, THAT'S...

JUST WHAT DO YOU FIND SO SELFISH ABOUT MY WORDS?

BUT EVEN SO, YOUR LOGIC SEEMS RATHER SELFISH.

THAT WOULD BE YOU, OF COURSE.

WHEN YOUR LORD HAD HIS BACK DRIVEN TO THE WALL AND WU WAS UNWILLING TO FIGHT CAO CAO, WHO WAS IT THAT ESCORTED YOU TO THE SOUTHLAND TO CONVINCE MY LORD TO FIGHT?

HMM...

YES, IT WAS NONE OTHER THAN ME. AND NOW, AFTER THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF BRAVE WU SOLDIERS HAVE SACRIFICED THEMSELVES, I'M TO RETURN EMPTY-HANDED ***YET AGAIN!?*** I WOULD BE EXECUTED IMMEDIATELY!

LEND!?

ALRIGHT THEN. WHY DON'T WE HAVE YOUR LORD "LEND JINGZHOU" TO MY LORD TEMPORARILY?

AND WHICH REGION WOULD THIS BE?

YES. MY LORD WILL BORROW JINGZHOU TEMPORARILY UNTIL HE OBTAINS ANOTHER SUITABLE REGION THAT HE CAN USE AS HIS NEW HOME.

HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE PLACE WHERE NEITHER WEI NOR WU'S INFLUENCES YET REACH. THAT PLACE IS SHU.*

HAN'S FORMER LANDS HAVE ALREADY SPLIT LARGELY BETWEEN WEI AND WU.

SHU...!?

*SOUTHWESTERN REGION IN CHINA BY THE SICHUAN BASIN. THE NAME SHU ORIGINATES FROM THE ANCIENT STATE ALSO CALLED SHU WHICH EXISTED THERE BEFORE BEING CONQUERED BY QIN IN 316B.C.

YES, THE WESTERN REGION WHERE THE YELLOW RIVER BEGINS.

YES.

MY LORD, PLEASE WRITE LU SU A NOTE OF GUARANTEE.


WILL THIS DO?



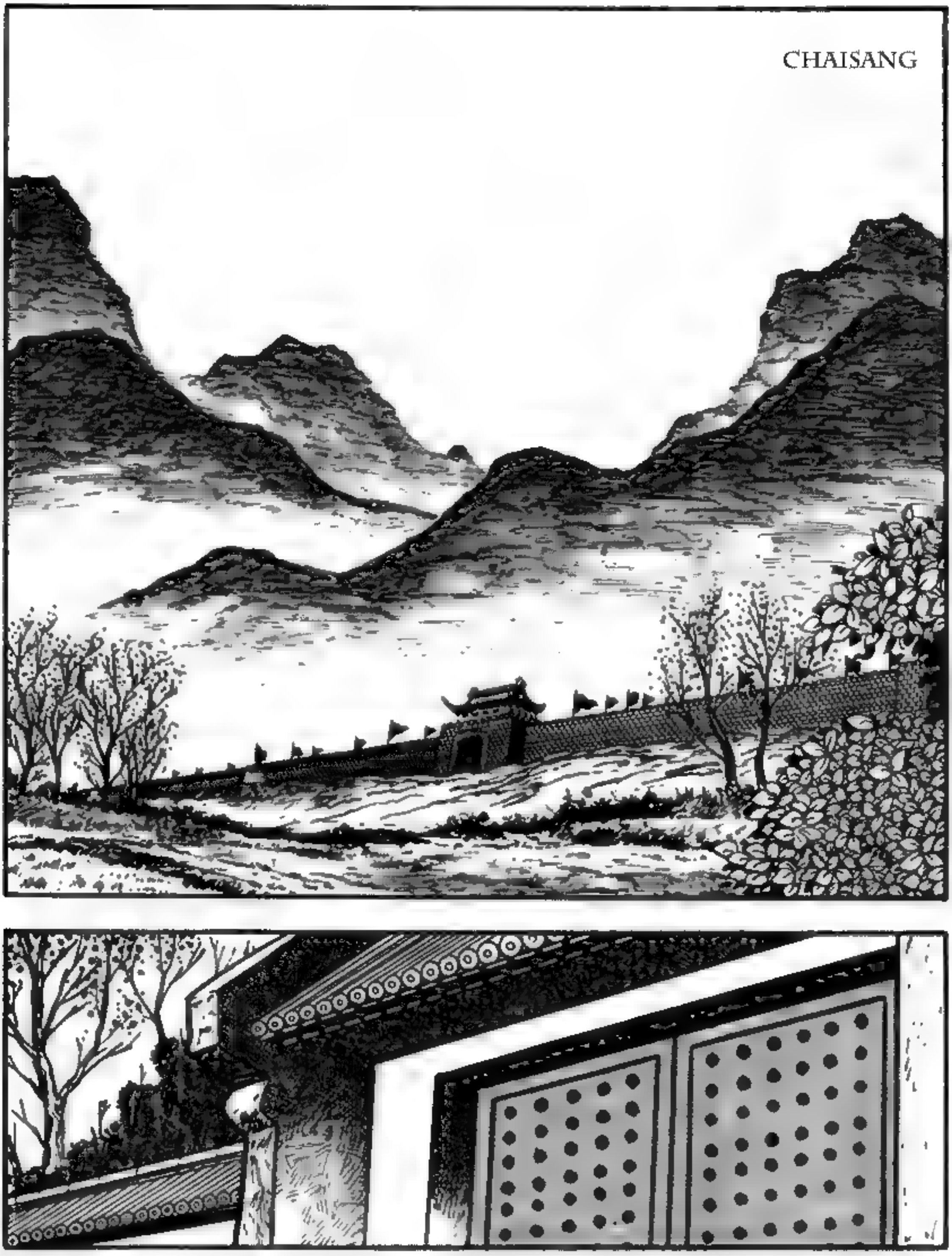

YES, GOOD. I SHALL ALSO SIGN MY NAME AS A THIRD-PARTY WITNESS.


LU SU, IF YOU WILL.


NOW THE ONLY SIGNATURE WE NEED IS FROM THE OTHER SIDE.


THERE WITH THIS, YOU WON'T BE RETURNING EMPTY-HANDED.




CHAISANG

NOT PARTICULARLY GOOD, BUT NOT PARTICULARLY BAD EITHER.

HOW IS YOUR HEALTH THESE DAYS, ADMIRAL?

BY THE WAY, ARE YOU ON YOUR WAY BACK FROM JINGZHOU?

THE DOCTORS TOLD ME NOT TO BRING FURTHER STRESS UPON MYSELF SO I'M PLANNING TO RELAX HERE TEMPORARILY AND RECUPERATE.

YES, AND I THOUGHT I SHOULD DROP BY HERE AND SEE HOW YOU WERE DOING.


WELL, IT DIDN'T QUITE GO AS PLANNED...


AND WHAT OF THE JINGZHOU OWNERSHIP MATTER?




BUT I AT LEAST MANAGED TO BRING A SIGNED CONTRACT.


ALTHOUGH THIS MIGHT SEEM LIKE A FAIR CONTRACT ON THE SURFACE, IT STATES NOTHING ABOUT WHEN LIU BEI WILL ACTUALLY HAVE TO RETURN JINGZHOU. JUST WHO KNOWS WHEN EXACTLY HE'LL CONQUER SHU? 10 YEARS FROM NOW? OR MAYBE EVEN A 100?


LU SU, YOU'VE BEEN HAD BY KONGMING AGAIN!

NOT ONLY THAT, YOU WERE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO SIGN YOUR OWN NAME! THAT MEANS IF LIU BEI WERE TO EVER BREAK THIS PROMISE, THEN YOU WOULD BE HELD PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE!

YOU REALLY ARE TOO NAIVE, LU SU.

BUT ENOUGH ABOUT THAT. REGRETTING THE PAST WON'T HELP IMPROVE OUR CURRENT SITUATION. WE MUST COME UP WITH A PLAN OF SOME SORT...

ARE YOU ACQUAINTED WITH OUR LORD'S YOUNGER SISTER, LADY SUN REN?

AH, THAT'S IT!

YES, YES, THE WARRIOR PRINCESS.

YES, I'VE MET WITH HER ONCE BEFORE. SHE'S QUITE FOND OF MARTIAL ARTS AND WEAPONS TO THE EXTENT THAT SHE EVEN CARRIES A SMALL BOW WITH HER WHEREVER SHE GOES. I HEAR THE COMMONERS HAVE EVEN GIVEN HER THE NICKNAME, "PRINCESS GONGYAO."

*GONGYAO JI (PRINCESS GONGYAO) MEANS "THE PRINCESS WITH A BOW."

B-BUT LIU BEI IS ALREADY 50 YEARS OLD! COMPARED TO HIM, LADY SUN IS BARELY 17...!

WHAT!?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT HAVING HER MARRY LIU BEI?

I'M CLEARLY TALKING ABOUT A TRAP.

LU SU, WHY MUST YOU TAKE EVERY-THING SO SERIOUSLY?

WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WE'LL HOLD THE WEDDING HERE TO FORCE LIU BEI TO COME. AND WHEN HE DOES, WE'LL EITHER KILL HIM OR RANSOM HIM FOR THE OWNERSHIP OF JINGZHOU.

HE WILL ONCE I EXPLAIN HOW IT'S ALL PART OF MY PLAN.

NEVER MIND WHAT I THINK, DO YOU REALLY THINK OUR LORD WOULD ALLOW SUCH A MARRIAGE?





FORGIVE ME, MY LORD.

LU SU! YOU WENT ALL THE WAY TO JINGZHOU AND CAME BACK WITH ONLY THIS USELESS PIECE OF PAPER!? EVEN A CHILD WOULD'VE FARED BETTER THAN YOU!

HERE IS THE LETTER FROM HIM.

HOWEVER, ADMIRAL ZHOU YU HAS DEVISED A NEW PLAN TO GET JINGZHOU BACK.

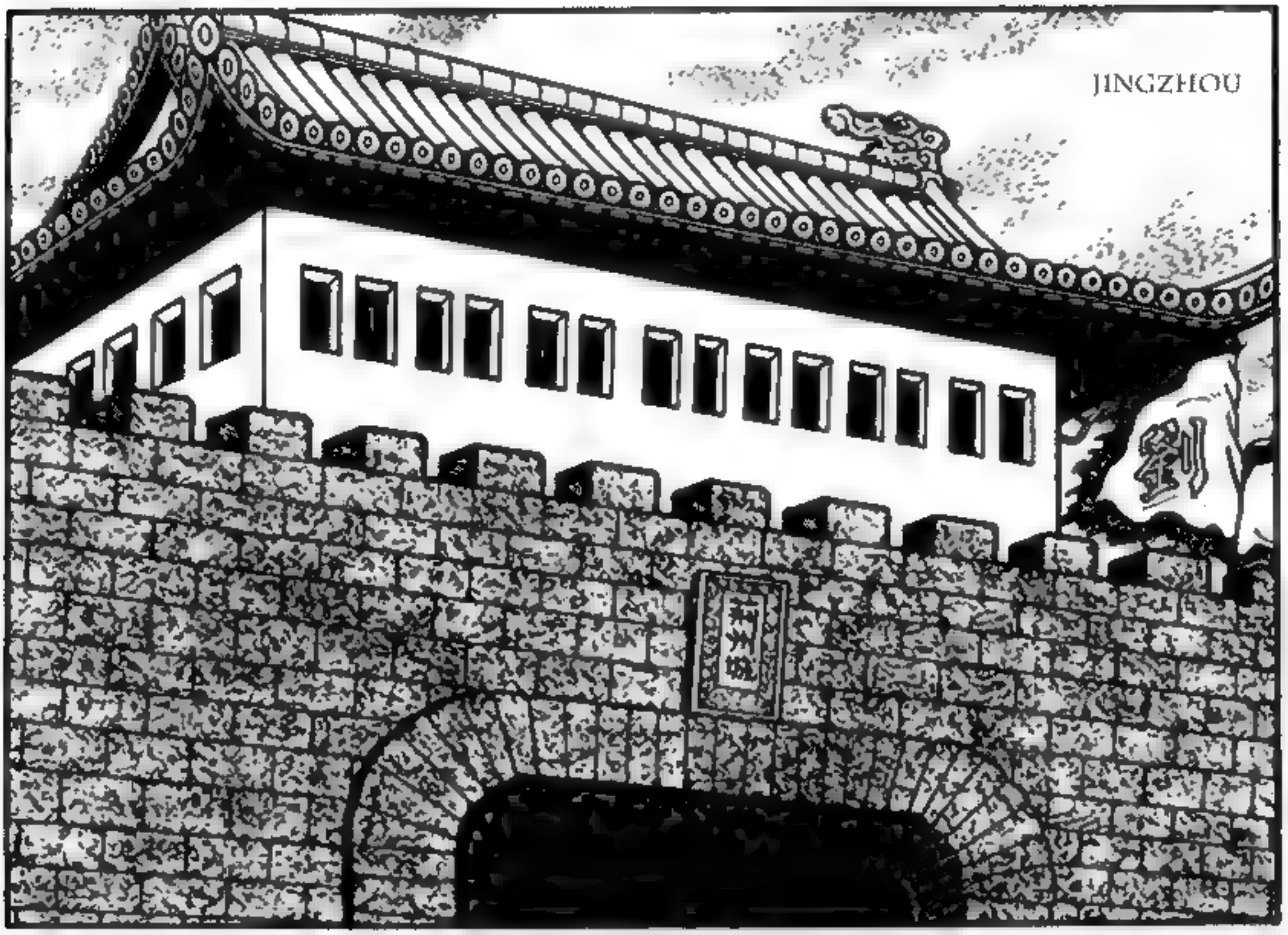
HMM...

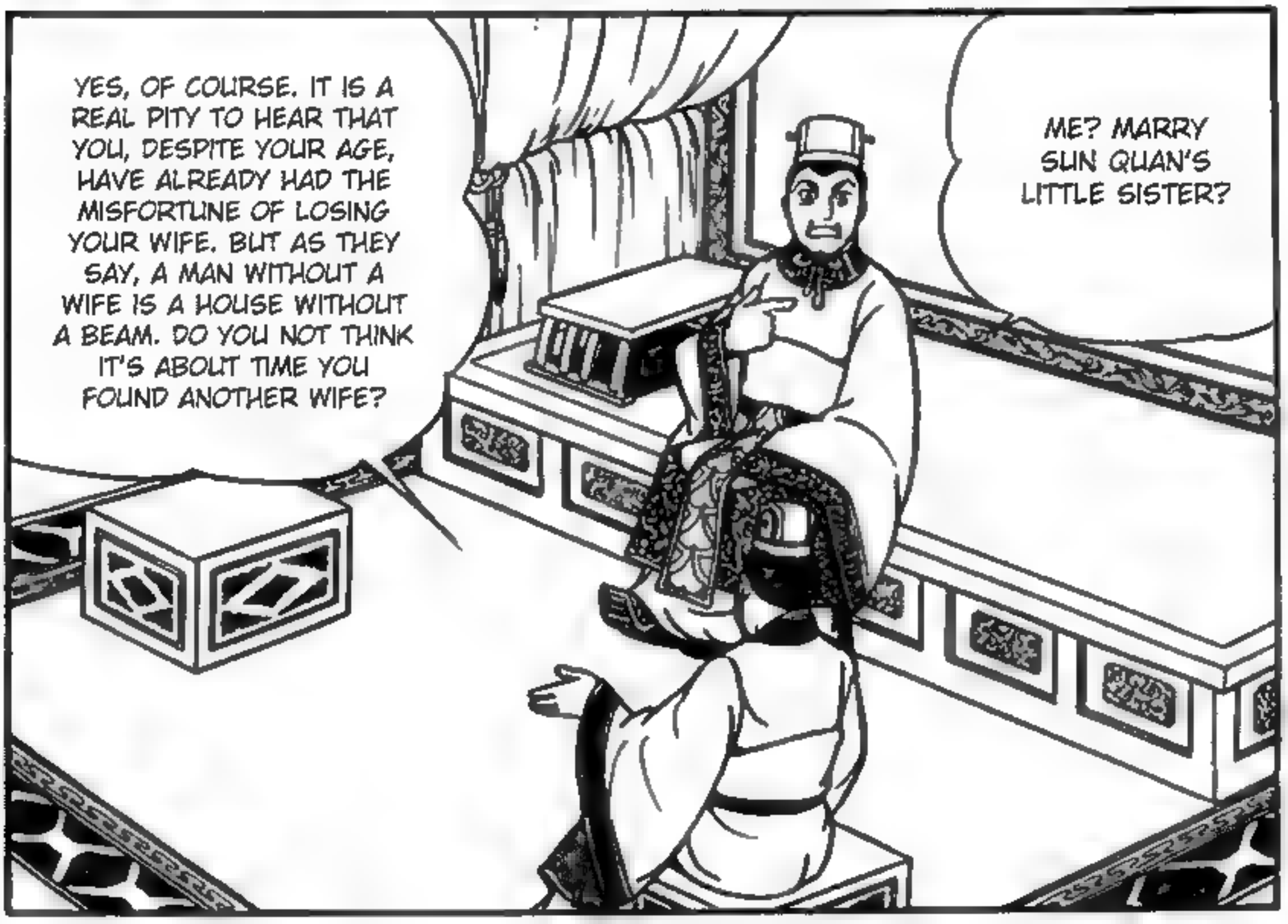
THIS PLAN JUST MIGHT WORK BRILLIANTLY...

LIU BEI WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE NO EXCUSE IF THE WEDDING WERE HELD HERE...

YES, MY LORD.

SEND LU FAN OUT AS AN ENVOY TO PROPOSE THIS MARRIAGE TO LIU BEI.


JINGZHOU


YES, OF COURSE. IT IS A REAL PITY TO HEAR THAT YOU, DESPITE YOUR AGE, HAVE ALREADY HAD THE MISFORTUNE OF LOSING YOUR WIFE. BUT AS THEY SAY, A MAN WITHOUT A WIFE IS A HOUSE WITHOUT A BEAM. DO YOU NOT THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU FOUND ANOTHER WIFE?
ME? MARRY SUN QUAN'S LITTLE SISTER?

HMM...

NOT ONLY THAT, THIS MARRIAGE WOULD UNITE BOTH YOUR HOUSE AND MY LORD'S BY BLOOD, THEREBY ENSURING PEACE BETWEEN OUR TWO STATES.

AFTER ALL, THIS IS A DIPLOMATIC MARRIAGE WHOSE PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO PEACE-FULLY JOIN OUR TWO STATES. NOT ONLY THAT, LADY SUN CARES NOT FOR YOUR AGE AND HAS ALREADY CONSENTED.

AGE IS NOT A PROBLEM FOR THIS MARRIAGE.

BUT I HEAR LADY SUN IS STILL JUST A 17 YEAR OLD GIRL. COMPARED TO HER, I'M JUST AN OLD MAN.

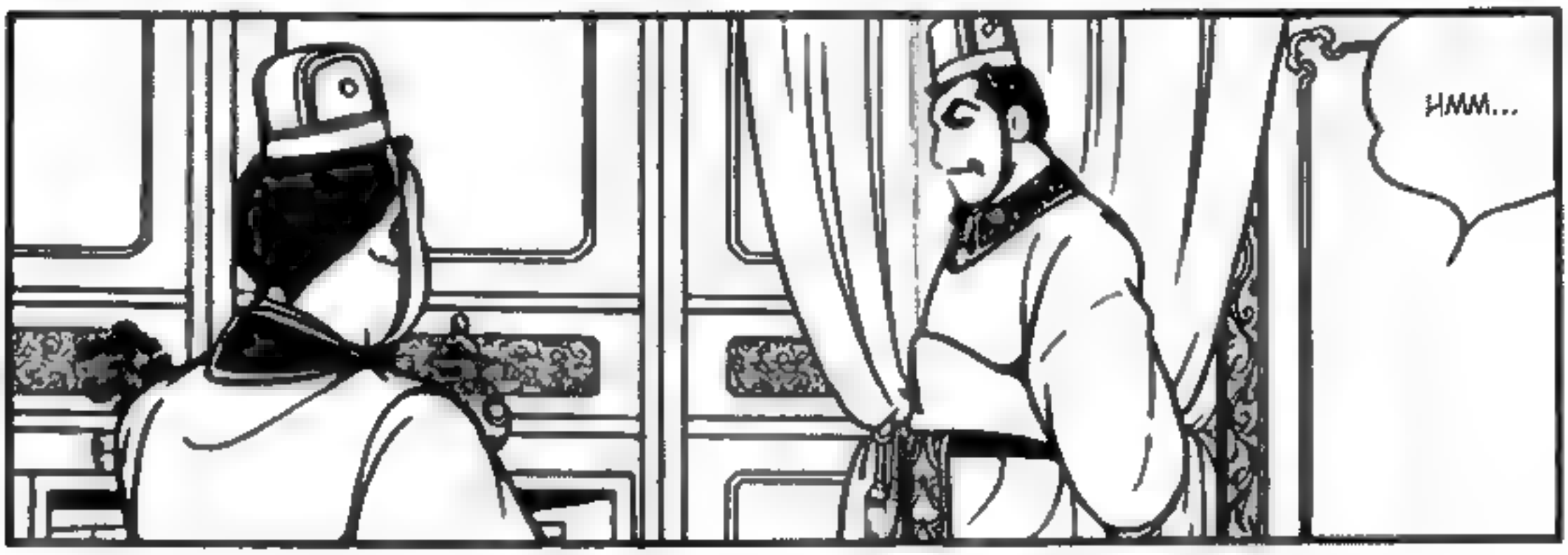
THEREFORE, SHE STATED SHE WOULD RATHER MARRY A BATTLE-HARDENED OLD MAN WHO HAS ALREADY MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF THAN SOME NAIVE YOUNGSTER WHO HAS YET TO PROVE HIMSELF TO THE WORLD.

...

FOR YOU SEE, SHE IS QUITE FOND OF WAR AND MARTIAL ARTS. SO MUCH SO THAT SHE EVEN CARRIES A SMALL BOW WITH HER AT ALL TIMES.


PLEASE, SIR. HOW COULD ZHOU YU, OR ANYONE FOR THAT MATTER, PROPOSE THIS MARRIAGE WITHOUT MY LORD'S DIRECT CONSENT?


IS THIS REALLY WHAT SUN QUAN WISHES OR IS THIS WHAT ZHOU YU WISHES?


HMM...


YES, OF COURSE. TAKE YOUR TIME.
PLEASE GIVE ME SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT THIS MATTER BEFORE I CAN GIVE YOU MY REPLY.

WHAT DO YOU GENTLEMEN THINK ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL?

BY MY READING OF THE OMENS, I'M CONFIDENT MY LORD WILL END UP PROFITING FROM THIS MARRIAGE.

I APPROVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY. THOUGH I'M SURE THEY HAVE SOME SORT OF TRICK UP THEIR SLEEVES,


ONCE THEY BELIEVE THAT WE'VE FALLEN FOR WHATEVER THEY'RE SCHEMING, IT'LL BE THE PERFECT TIME FOR US TO MAKE OUR MOVE.
FOR THE TIME BEING, PLEASE GO TO THE SOUTHLANDS FOR THE WEDDING.
YES, I AGREE. IT WOULD BE AKIN TO WILLINGLY WALKING INSIDE A TIGER'S DEN.
BUT KONGMING, IF THIS IS REALLY ONE OF ZHOU YU'S PLOT, OUR LORD WILL BE KILLED FOR CERTAIN...!
YES, I'M FULLY AWARE OF THE RISKS. BUT REST ASSURED, I'VE ALREADY THOUGHT UP OF COUNTERMEASURES.

MOREOVER, THIS MARRIAGE WILL BE KEY TO PREVENTING FUTURE CONFLICTS BETWEEN WU AND US.

I HEAR LADY SUN IS QUITE A BEAUTIFUL GIRL AND AS THE ENVOY LU FAN POINTED OUT, IT IS INDEED TIME FOR MY LORD TO REMARRY.

FINE, IF YOU INSIST, KONGMING.

AT ONCE, MY LORD.

SUN QIAN, PLEASE GO INFORM SUN QUAN THAT I WILL ACCEPT THE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL.

IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE SUN QIAN RETURNED BACK FROM WU.

SUN QUAN LOOKED A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED TO SEE ME, AS IF HE EXPECTED YOU TO COME IN PERSON ALREADY.

WELL? HOW WAS HIS RESPONSE?

I SEE...

HE URGENTLY ASKS YOU TO COME IMMEDIATELY AS TO SECURE PEACE BETWEEN OUR TWO STATES IF EVEN A DAY SOONER.

ZHAO ZILONG.

FEAR NOT, MY LORD.

THEN TAKE THESE 3 POUCHES WITH YOU.

UNDER-STOOD.

YOU ARE ENTASKED WITH PROTECTING OUR LORD'S LIFE FOR THE ENTIRE DURATION OF HIS VISIT, UNDERSTOOD?

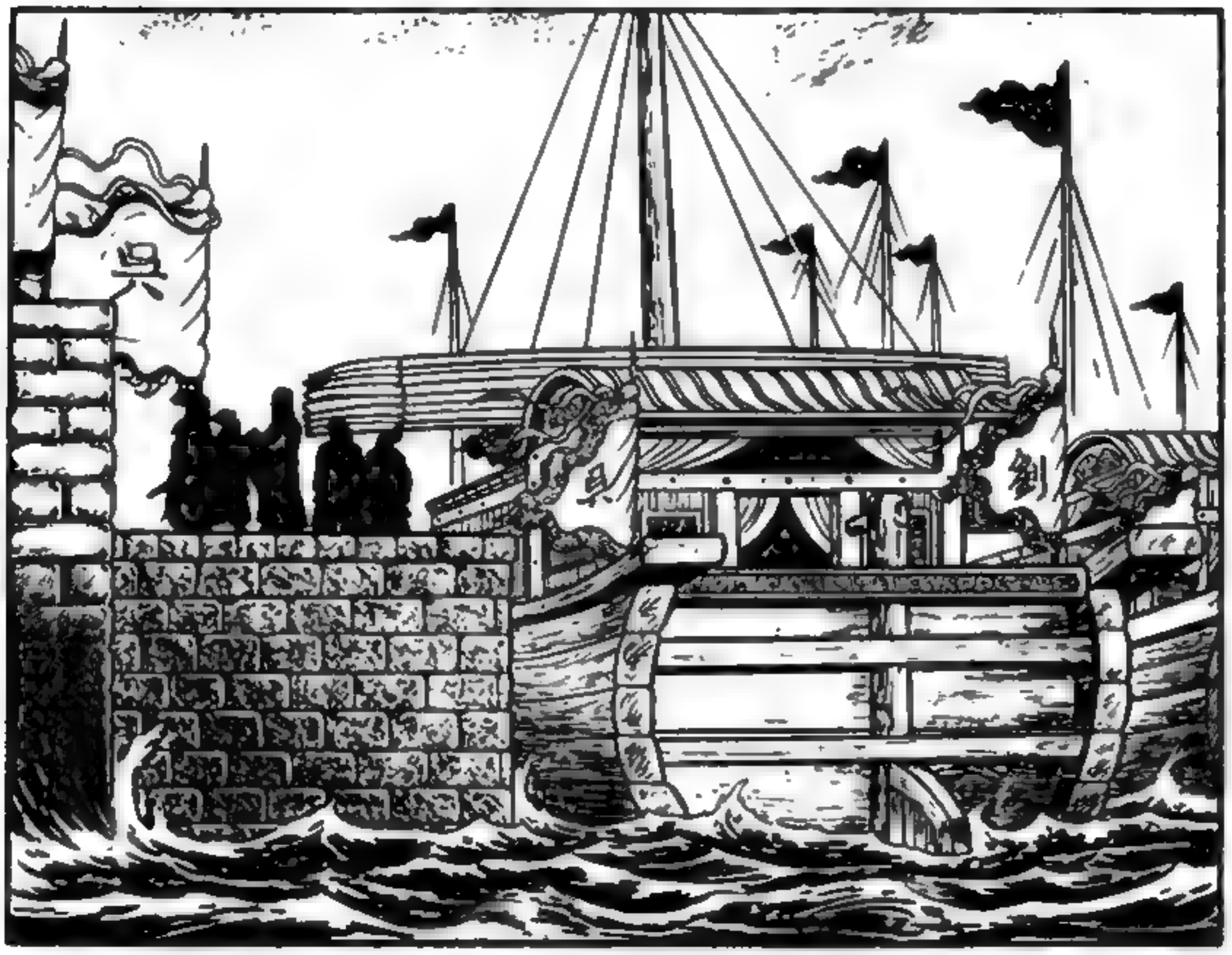
?

YES.

THERE ARE INSTRUCTIONS WRITTEN IN EACH OF THOSE POUCHES. FOLLOW THEM AND ALL SHOULD BE FINE.

AND SO, IN THE WINTER OF 209 AD, LIU BEI SAILED SOUTH FOR WU, ACCOMPANIED BY ZHAO ZILONG AND 500 OTHER SOLDIERS

TEMPLE OF SWEET DEW







*FATHER OF THE TWO QIAO SISTERS, AND THUS A FATHER IN LAW TO ZHOU YU AND THE LATE SUN CE

THEN LET US DO AS HE SAYS.

IS THAT SO?

KONGMING ADVISES US TO VISIT THE STATE PATRIARCH BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, MY LORD.

LOAD THE GIFTS ONTO THE HORSES.

IS IT SOME RICH PERSON?

HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON?

IT IS LIU BEI FROM JINGZHOU.

W-WHAT!

?

MASTER, YOU HAVE A GUEST.

I MIGHT NOT KNOW WHY HE'S HERE BUT MAKE SURE TO RECEIVE HIM WITH FULL RESPECT.

AND I AM LIU BEI XUANDE. IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.

WELCOME, SIR. I AM STATE PATRIARCH QIAO.

OH, TO GIVE YOU THE PROPER GREETINGS BEFORE THE MARRIAGE, OF COURSE.

MIGHT I ASK WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE ALL OF A SUDDEN?

YES, TO YOUR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, LADY SUN.

MARRIAGE?

NO, I HAD NO IDEA. IT BAFFLES ME HOW I HAVEN'T BEEN YET INFORMED OF SUCH AN IMPORTANT MATTER.

WHAT!?

WERE YOU PERHAPS NOT AWARE...?

YES, I HEAR SHE'S QUITE THE GIRL...

NEVERTHELESS, I'M SURE LADY SUN SHAN'T OBJECT TO A MARRIAGE WITH THE IMPERIAL UNCLE.

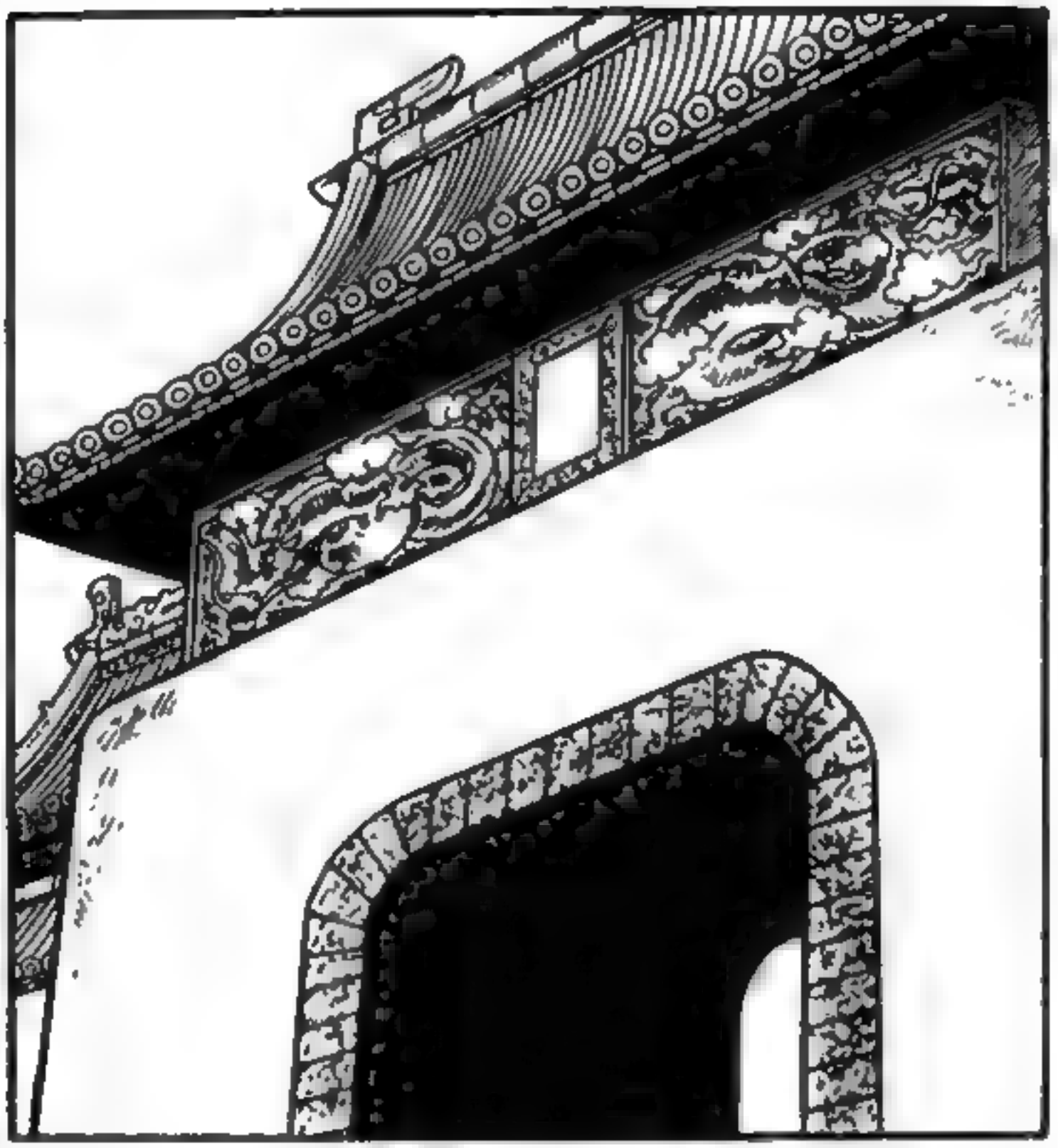
NO, I ONLY STEPPED OFF FROM THE BOAT A SHORT WHILE AGO. I THOUGHT IT'D BE BEST TO PAY THE STATE PATRIARCH A VISIT BEFORE DOING ANYTHING ELSE...

HAVE YOU INFORMED SUN QUAN THAT YOU'VE ARRIVED?

I'LL BE OFF TO THE PALACE SO IN THE MEANTIME, ATTEND TO OUR HONOURED GUEST'S EVERY NEED.

OH NO, YOU OVERESTIMATE MY IMPORTANCE. ALLOW ME TO QUICKLY HEAD TO THE PALACE AND INFORM HIM OF YOUR ARRIVAL.






PARDON ME FOR THE LATE CONGRATULA-TORY VISIT BUT I ONLY HEARD JUST TODAY.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE TODAY?

WHY, THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN YOUR DAUGHTER AND LIU BEI XUANDE, OF COURSE.

OH? AND WHAT IS IT YOU WISH TO CONGRATULATE ME FOR?

Y-YES...

LIU BEI WILL MARRY MY DAUGHTER!?

WHAT!?

BUT FROM WHAT I HEAR, IT WAS SUN QUAN WHO PROPOSED THIS MARRIAGE...

BUT I HEAR THAT LIU BEI IS ALREADY SO WHILE MY LITTLE GIRL IS STILL ONLY 17! HOW COULD THIS BE!?

WHY WOULD I JOKE ABOUT SUCH A MATTER?

T-THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING...! IF THIS IS SOME SORT OF JOKE, IT'S HARDLY FUNNY!

I PERSONALLY SAW THE COMMOTION OUTSIDE IN THE STREETS AS I CAME HERE TO VISIT YOU. THE PEOPLE ARE ALL TALKING ABOUT THIS MARRIAGE. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, SEND A SERVANT OUT TO CHECK FOR YOURSELF.

YES?

SERVANT!

AS YOU WISH.

GO OUTSIDE AND SEE WHAT ALL THE PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT.

THERE'S NO WAY MY CUTE LITTLE GIRL WOULD BE MARRIED OFF TO SOME 50 YEAR OLD MAN...





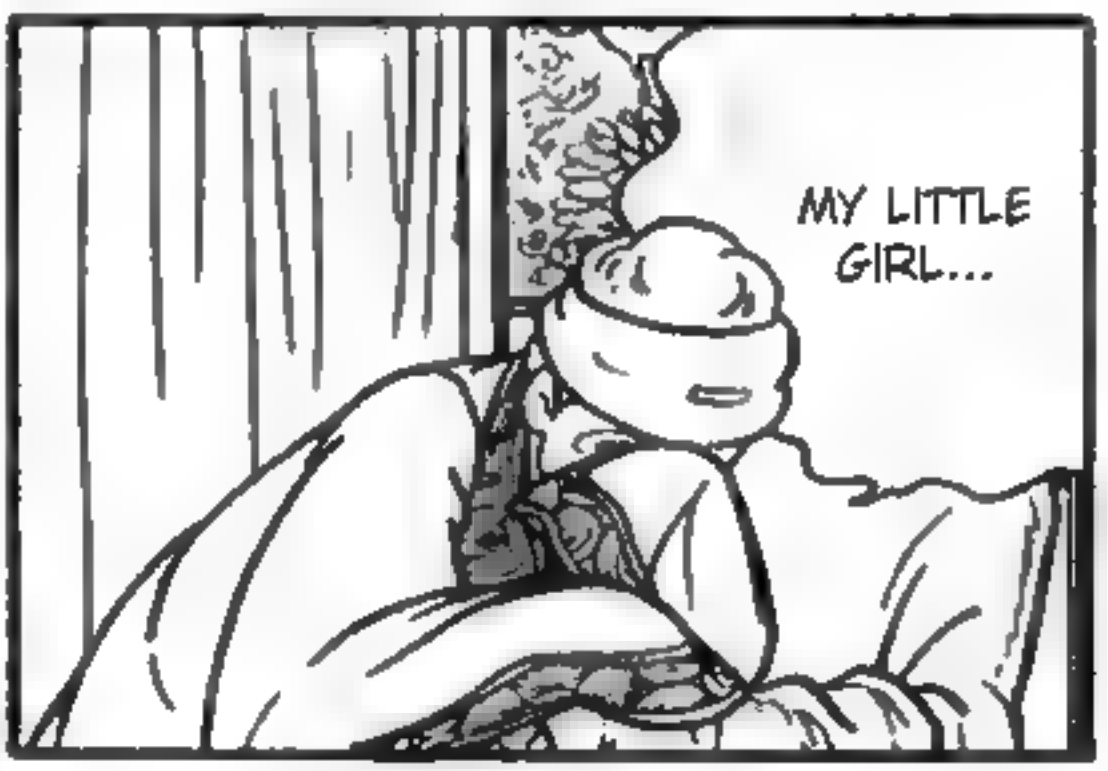

YOU SAID IT. WITH THIS UNION OF STATES, EVEN WEI WILL BE NO THREAT.
THANK GOD FOR THIS MARRIAGE. THIS MIGHT FINALLY BE THE START OF A PEACEFUL AGE.




THIS... THIS CAN'T BE...


WHAT!? THE ENTIRE CITY IS TALKING ABOUT IT!?


NO, I CAN'T JUST SIT HERE AND WEEP. I MUST PUT A STOP TO THIS MARRIAGE.


MY LITTLE GIRL...



MOTHER WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE TODAY?

QUAN!

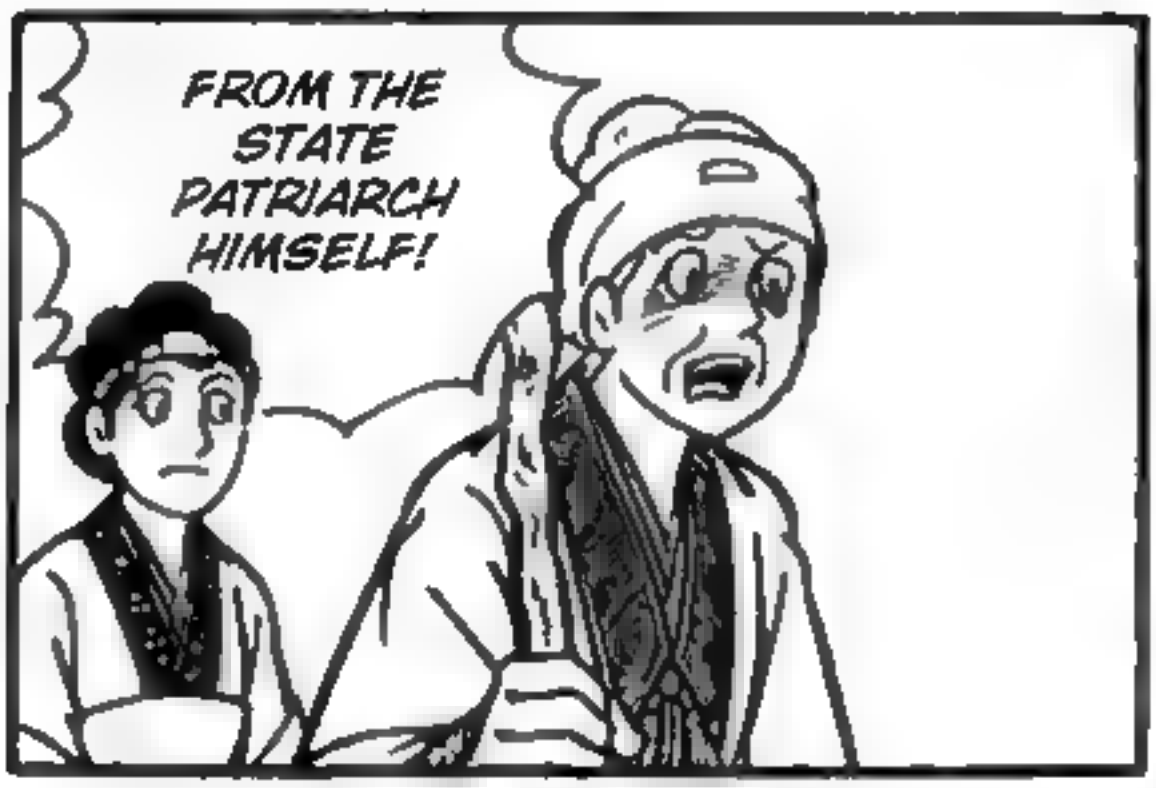
IF THAT'S REALLY SO, THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU CONSULT ME ABOUT YOUR LITTLE SISTER'S MARRIAGE!?

WHEN DID I EVER *NOT* THINK OF YOU AS MY MOTHER?

I MIGHT BE AN OLD WOMAN BUT I'M STILL ALSO YOUR MOTHER!

YOU STILL DARE TO PLAY GAMES WITH ME!? SHE MIGHT BE YOUR LITTLE SISTER BUT SHE'S ALSO MY DAUGHTER! WHEN DID YOU PROPOSE THIS ABSURD MARRIAGE TO LIU BEI!?

WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?


FROM THE STATE PATRIARCH HIMSELF!


W-WHO DID YOU HEAR THIS FROM?


W-WAS THIS MATTER SUPPOSED TO BE KEPT SECRET? I WOULD'VE DONE SO IF I KNEW BUT IT SEEMS THE ENTIRE CITY IS ALREADY AWARE OF THIS MARRIAGE...




YOU MISUNDER-STAND THE WHOLE SITUATION. THIS IS ACTUALLY ALL PART OF ZHOU YU'S PLOT.

TRYING TO TAKE BACK JINGZHOU WILL TAKE VAST SUMS OF MONEY AND THE LIVES OF MANY SOLDIERS. THAT IS WHY ZHOU YU HAS PROPOSED I LURE LIU BEI HERE UNDER THE PRETENSE OF MARRIAGE AND THEN TAKE HIM HOSTAGE. THIS WAY, WE CAN OBTAIN JINGZHOU WITHOUT SPILLING A DROP OF BLOOD.

AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE EVEN IF THIS PLAN WERE TO SUCCEED!? SHE WOULD BECOME A WIDOW BEFORE EVEN HAVING THE CHANCE TO BE A BRIDE! NOT ONLY THAT, NO MAN WOULD SEEK HER HAND IN MARRIAGE WHEN THEY HEAR WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LAST ONE WHO DID!

YOU MEAN TO SAY THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES WHICH PROTECT THESE 6 DISTRICTS AND 81 COUNTIES OF THE SOUTHLAND CAN'T TAKE JINGZHOU WITHOUT USING MY LITTLE GIRL AS BAIT!? OR HAS HE BECOME SO BLINDED BY HIS OWN PERSONAL AMBITION TO SERIOUSLY GO THROUGH WITH THIS!?

I, TOO, OBJECT TO THIS PLAN. IF THE WORLD HEARS HOW WU SET UP A FAKE MARRIAGE TO KILL LIU BEI, YOU WILL LOSE BOTH RESPECT AND THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE. THIS PLAN WOULD ONLY LEAVE A BLACK SMEAR ON WU'S PROUD HISTORY.

BUT... THE AGE GAP IS TOO LARGE.

CONSIDERING HOW NEWS OF THIS MARRIAGE IS ALREADY KNOWN BY ALL YOUR PEOPLE, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO JUST GO THROUGH WITH THE WEDDING.

PERHAPS, BUT LIU BEI IS NOW WIDELY KNOWN AS CHAMPION OF THE COMMON PEOPLE AND IS DESCENDED FROM THE IMPERIAL LINEAGE. TO EARN A HUSBAND LIKE THAT WOULD HARDLY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR LADY SUN.

BRING HIM TO THE TEMPLE OF SWEET DEW TOMORROW. IF I DON'T APPROVE OF HIM, THEN YOU MAY DO WHATEVER YOU PLEASE. BUT IF HE IS A WORTHY MAN, THEN I SHALL MARRY OFF MY DAUGHTER TO HIM.

NO, I STILL DON'T APPROVE OF THIS MARRIAGE. I SHALL SEE LIU BEI IN PERSON BEFORE MAKING MY DECISION ON WHETHER HE'S QUALIFIED TO MARRY MY DAUGHTER.

YES, MOTHER.

SO DON'T YOU DARE ACT ON YOUR OWN UNTIL THAT. UNDERSTOOD?

THIS HAS BECOME QUITE TROUBLESOME...

PARDON ME, MY LORD, BUT I COULD NOT HELP OVER-HEARING THE LOUD VOICES.

AH, LU FAN.

WORRY NOT, MY LORD.

YES, WELL, THAT'S OUR CURRENT PREDICAMENT.

BUT WHAT IF MY MOTHER APPROVES OF HIM...?

AS DOWAGER WU HAS SAID, WE MAY DO AS WISH IF SHE DOES NOT APPROVE OF LIU BEI. SO ALL MY LORD HAS TO DO WITH HIDE SOME SOLDIERS IN THE TEMPLE OF SWEET DEW AND WAIT FOR A CHANCE TO STRIKE.

OH, I DOUBT THAT...

HMM...

BUT IF SHE DOES APPROVE, HOWEVER UNLIKELY THAT MAY BE, THEN MY LORD SHOULD DELAY THE WEDDING UNTIL SHE CHANGES HER MIND.

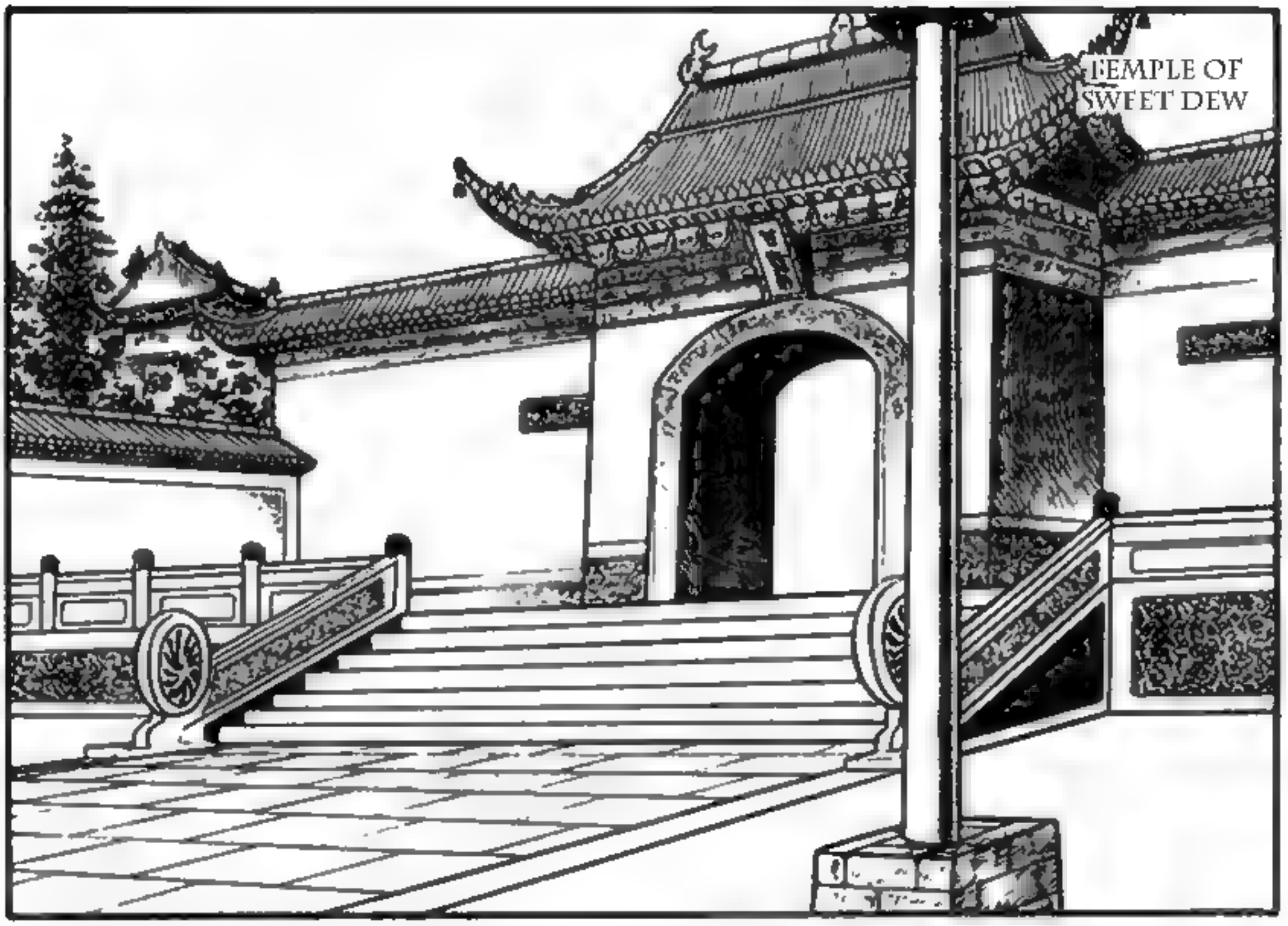

ALRIGHT. HAVE JIA HUA HIDE 300 SOLDIERS IN THE TEMPLE.
YES, MY LORD.
AND AS FOR YOU, ESCORT LIU BEI TO THE TEMPLE TOMORROW MORNING.
I PRAY THE HEAVENS MY MOTHER DOESN'T APPROVE OF HIM...

THANK YOU, LU FAN. PLEASE LEAD THE WAY.

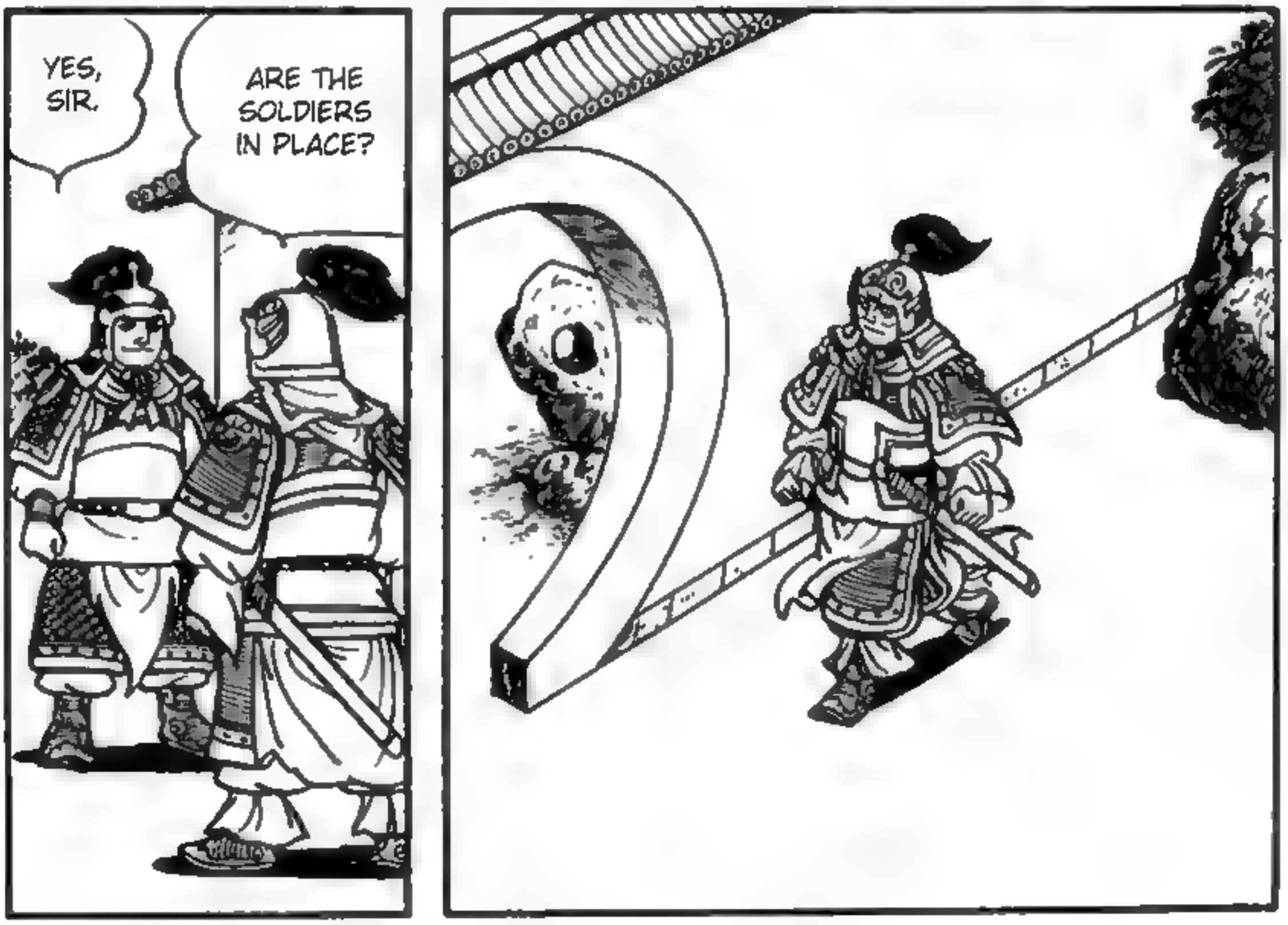
DOWAGER WU WISHES VERY MUCH TO MEET WITH THE MAN WHO WILL SOON BECOME HER NEW SON-IN-LAW. AND SO I'VE COME HERE TO ESCORT YOU.


YES.


ZHAO
ZILONG.



*CHINESE NAME IS CANLI TEMPLE



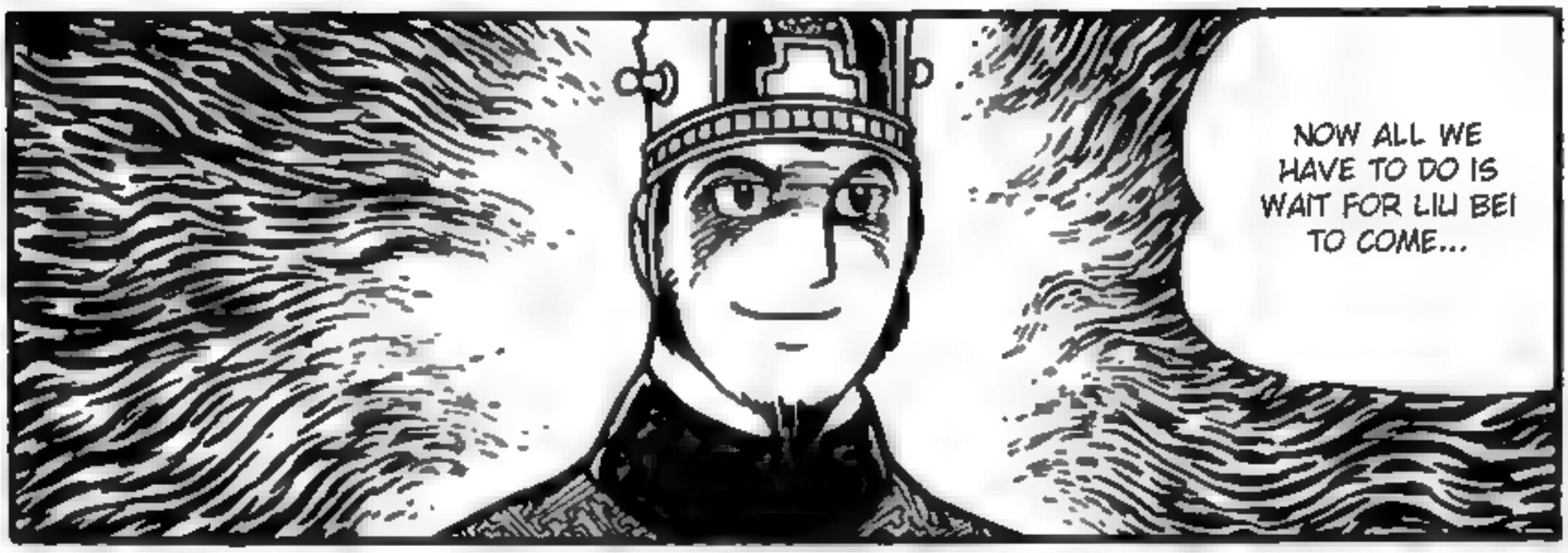
300 OF OUR BEST SOLDIERS ARE HIDDEN IN ALL CORNERS OF THIS TEMPLE. ALL WE AWAIT IS YOUR SIGNAL, GENERAL.

YES, SIR!

GOOD WORK. NOW STAY ON GUARD.

GOOD.

THE PREPARATIONS ON MY END ARE COMPLETE, MY LORD.


NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR LIU BEI TO COME...

AT THE TEMPLE OF SWEET DEW, DOWAGER WU, STATE PATRIARCH QIAO, SUN QUAN AND HIS HIDDEN TROOPS NOW EAGERLY AWAITED LIU BEI'S ARRIVAL

CROSS-SPLIT ROCK

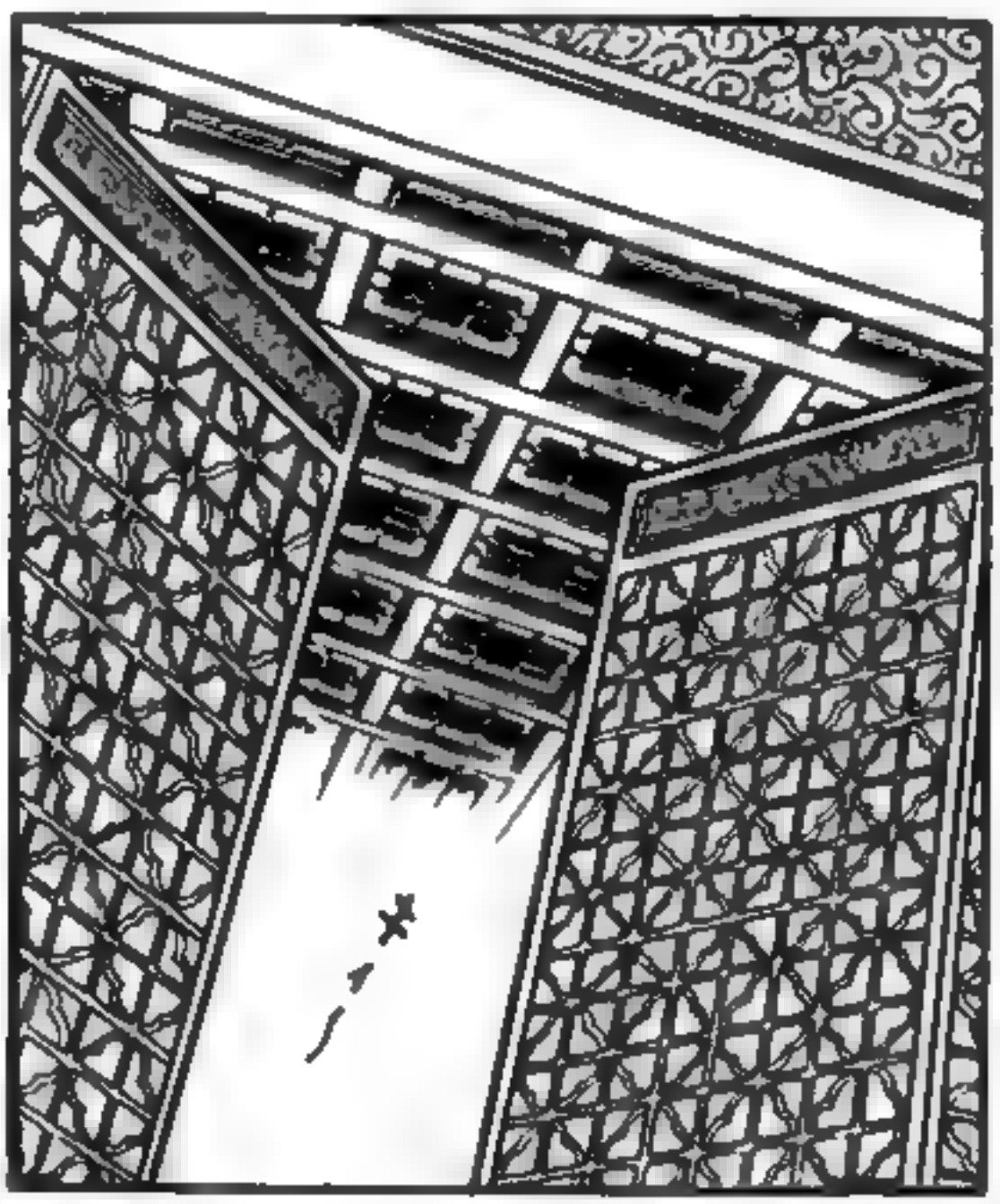


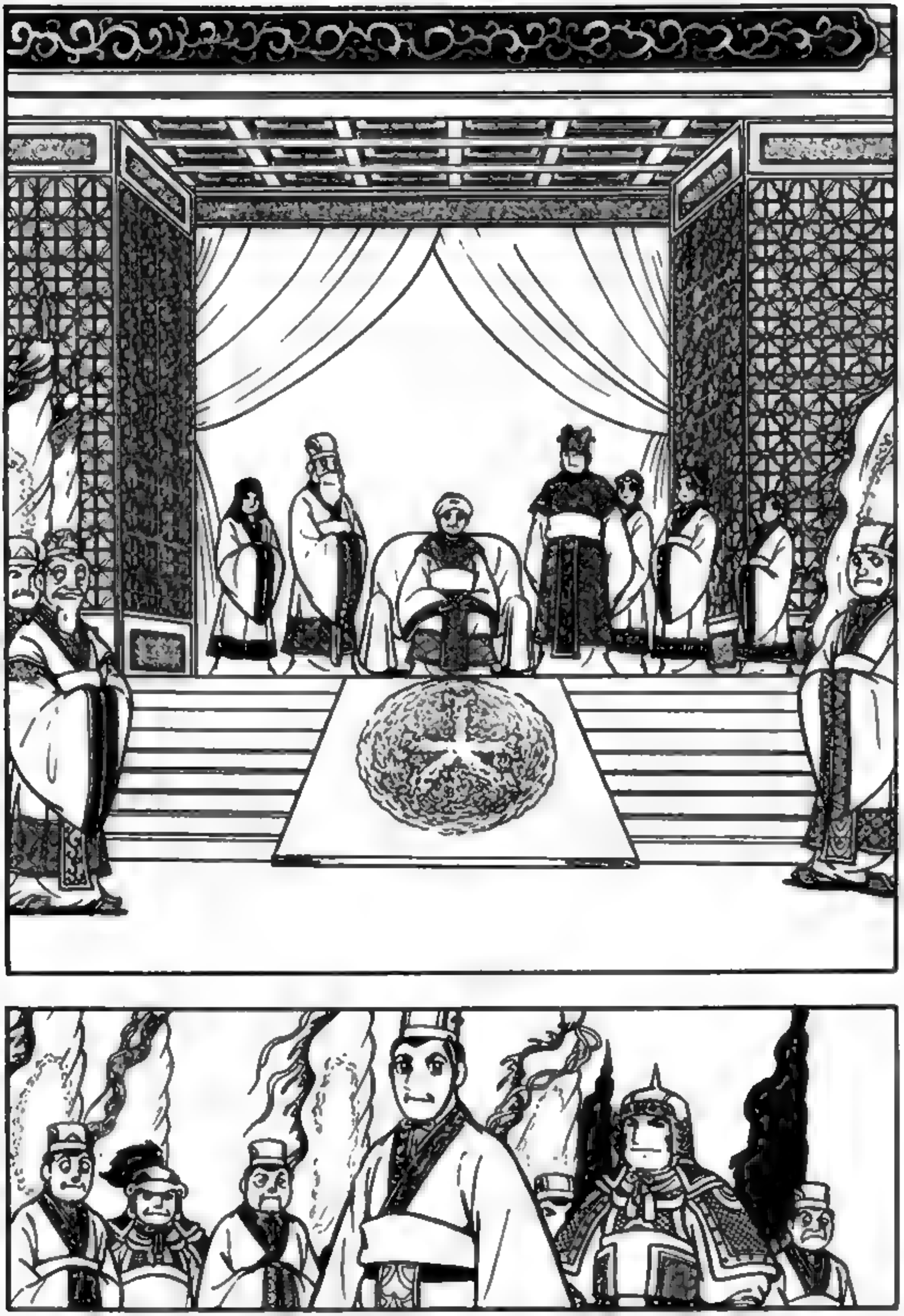



THIS WAY THEN, SIR. DOWAGER WU IS WAITING INSIDE.

LORD LIU BEI HAS ARRIVED.







WHAT DO YOU THINK?

SO THAT'S LIU BEI XUANDE.. QUITE A DIGNI-FIED AURA HE EXUDES...

I, TOO, THINK THE SAME. HE WOULD BE A FINE HUS-BAND FOR LADY SUN.

OH, I THINK HE LOOKS LIKE A SPLENDID MAN. YOU CAN IMMEDIATELY NOTICE HIS GENTLE GRACE AND DIGNIFIED AURA.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

I AM LIU BEI XUANDE. IT IS MY PLEASURE TO MEET WITH YOU.

A MOTHER'S DUTY, OF COURSE.

I CALLED YOU HERE TODAY TO SEE IF THE FUTURE HUSBAND OF MY BELOVED DAUGHTER LOOKED SUITABLE ENOUGH.

YOUR WORDS ARE TOO KIND.

I CAN TELL FROM A SINGLE GLANCE THAT YOU LIVE UP TO YOUR REPUTATION. I'M SURE MY DAUGHTER TOO WILL BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU AS HER HUSBAND.

YES.

ENOUGH WITH THE STIFF FORMALITIES. LET US ENJOY OURSELVES COMFORTABLY SINCE WE SHALL ALL BE ONE FAMILY SOON.

HM?

PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME. THE ONLY PEOPLE HERE ARE MY FAMILY MEMBERS AND PERSONAL SERVANTS.

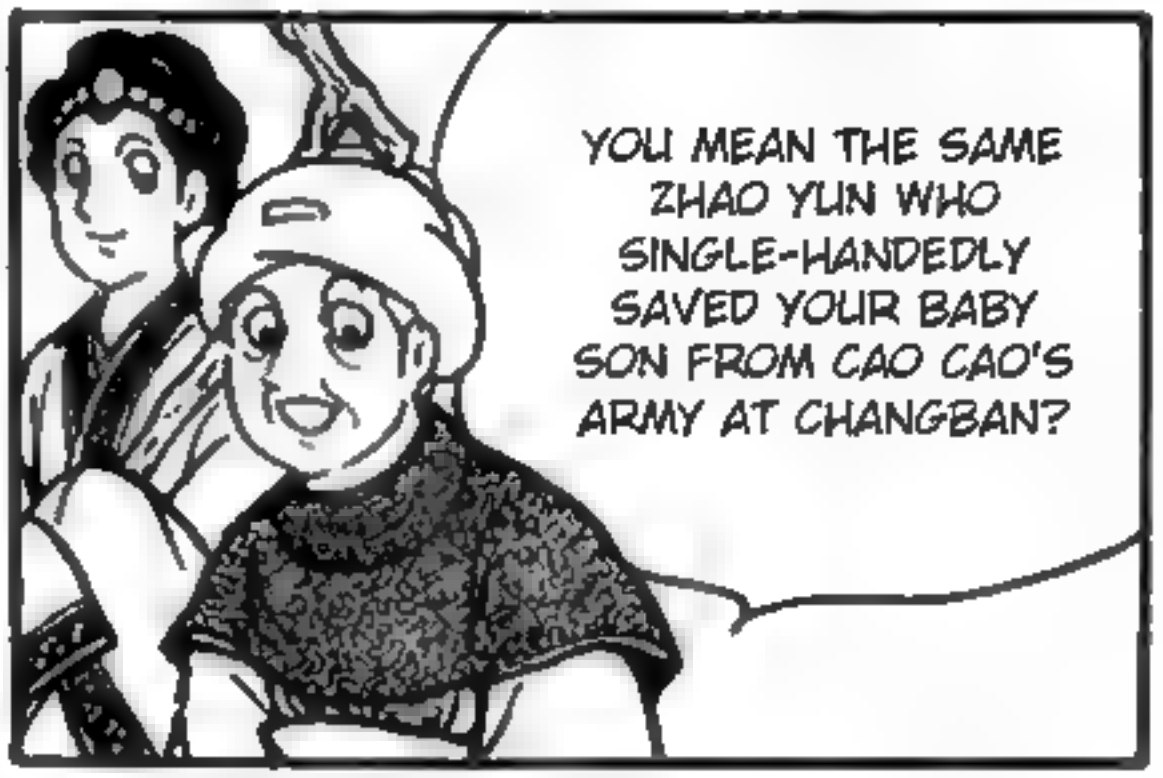



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HE IS MY LOYAL RETAINER, GENERAL ZHAO YUN ZILONG.


BY THE WAY, MAY I ASK WHO IS STANDING BEHIND YOU?


YES, THE VERY SAME.


YOU MEAN THE SAME ZHAO YUN WHO SINGLE-HANDEDLY SAVED YOUR BABY SON FROM CAO CAO'S ARMY AT CHANGBAN?

THANK YOU, MA'AM.

GENERAL, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO OFFER YOU A DRINK.

HERE, SIR.

DO NOT LET YOUR GUARD DOWN, MY LORD. THERE ARE SOLDIERS HIDDEN THROUGHOUT THESE TEMPLE GROUNDS.

THANK YOU AGAIN.

IF YOU INTEND ON TAKING MY LIFE, THEN PLEASE GIVE ME A SWORD SO THAT I MAY AT LEAST DIE FIGHTING LIKE A MAN.

THERE ARE ARMED SOLDIERS HIDDEN IN ALL CORNERS OF THESE TEMPLE GROUNDS, LOOKING AS IF THEY ARE READY TO KILL AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE.

W-WHAT IN HEAVENS ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

QUAN! ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS!?

LU FAN!

N-NO, I SWEAR I WAS UNAWARE. MAYBE LU FAN WOULD KNOW!?

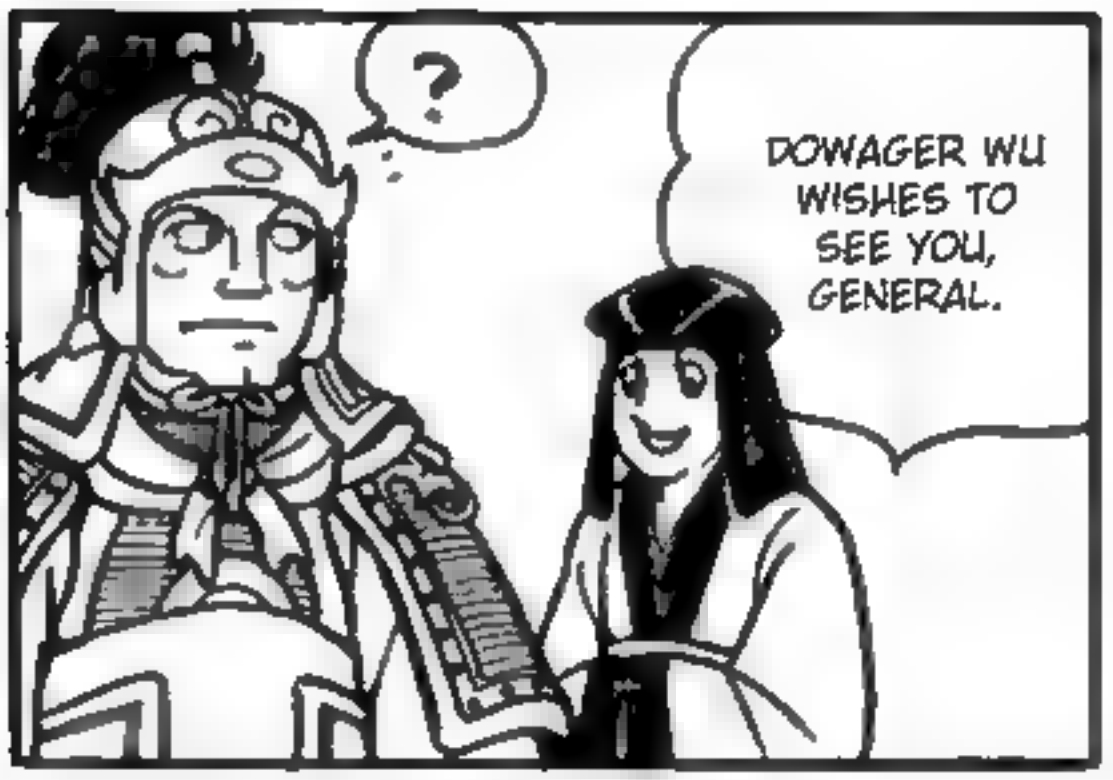
WELL THOSE SOLDIERS CAN'T BE ACTING ON THEIR OWN. SOMEONE MUST HAVE ORDERED THEM!

I, TOO, AM JUST AS CONFUSED, MA'AM...

RIGHT AWAY.

BRING JIA HUA TO ME THIS INSTANT!

Y-YES... IT MIGHT BE GENERAL JIA HUA.

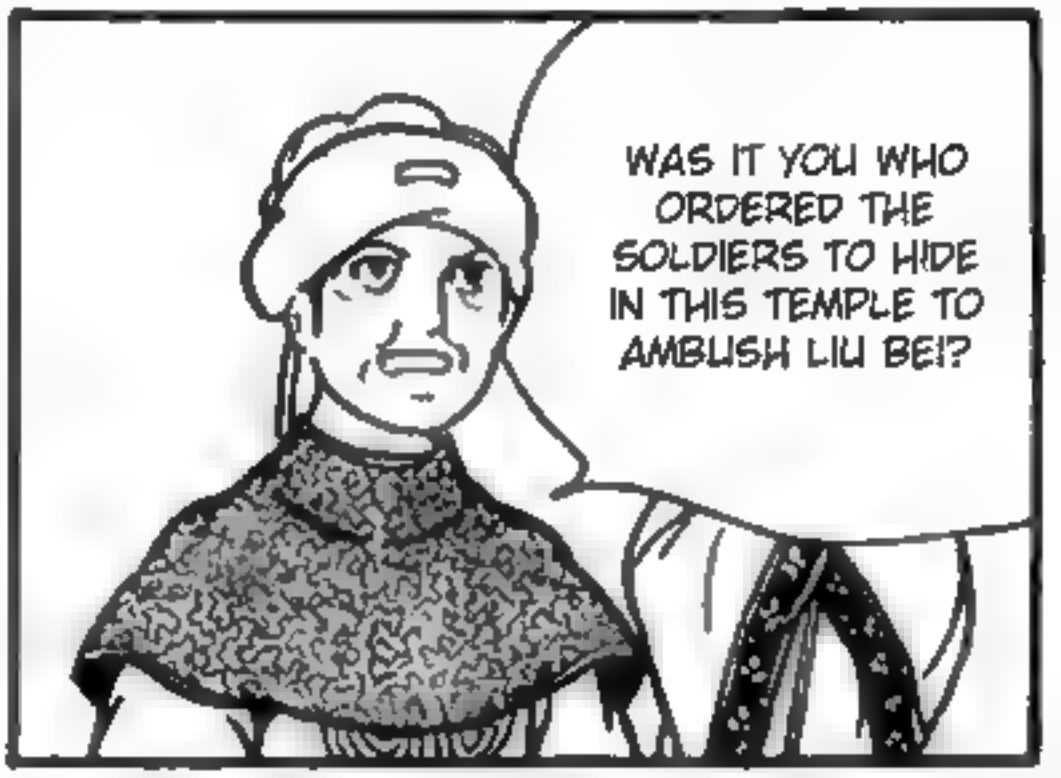

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DOWAGER WU WISHES TO SEE YOU, GENERAL.




YOU CALLED, MA'AM?






WAS IT YOU WHO ORDERED THE SOLDIERS TO HIDE IN THIS TEMPLE TO AMBUSH LIU BEI?

.....

WELL!? OUT WITH IT! WAS IT YOU OR DID SOMEONE ELSE ORDER YOU TO!?

SUCH IMPUDENCE IS UNFORGIVABLE! OFF WITH THIS MAN'S HEAD!

YOU REFUSE TO ANSWER?

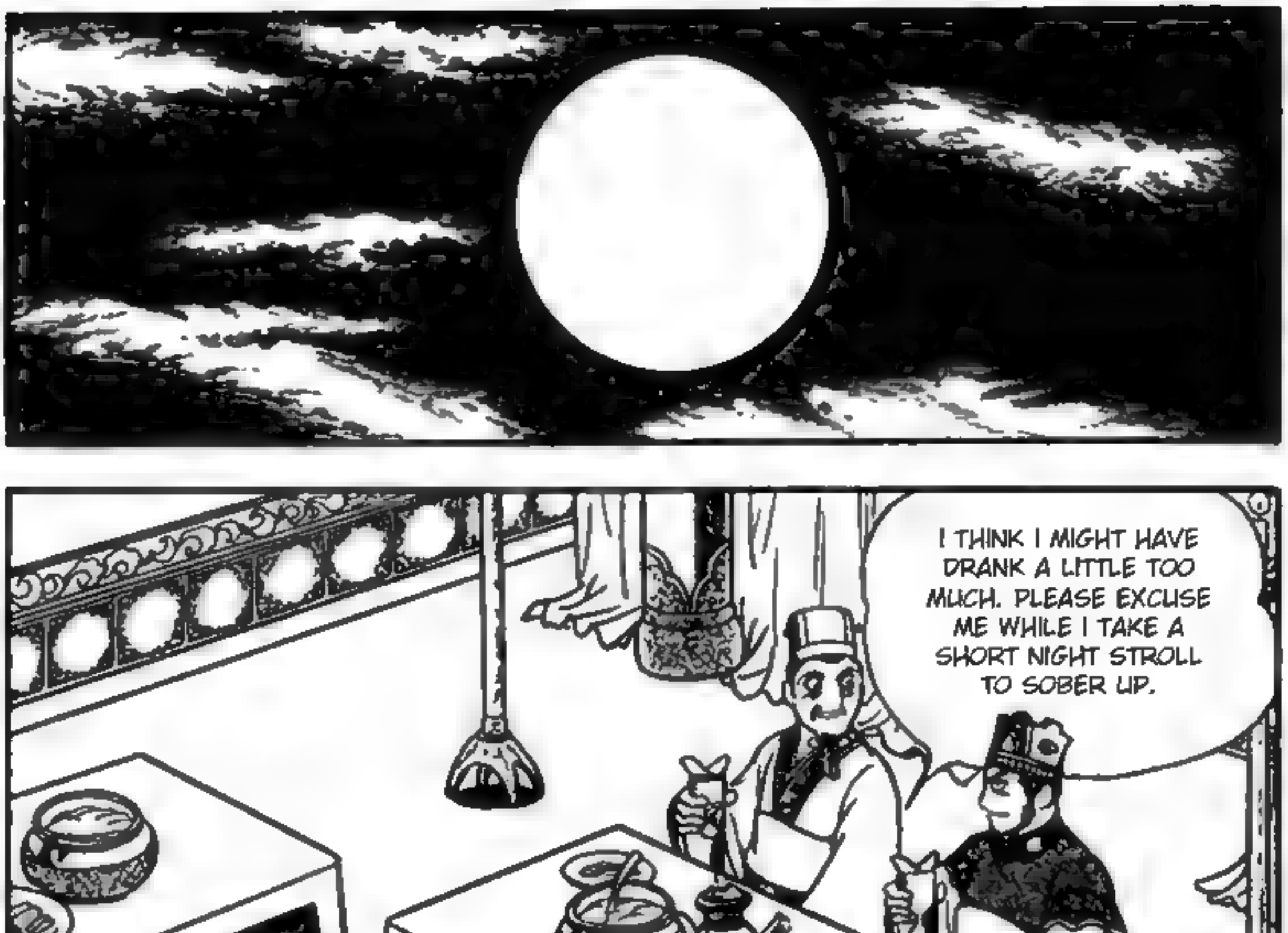
YES, MOTHER. I BEG YOU TO PARDON JIA HUA.

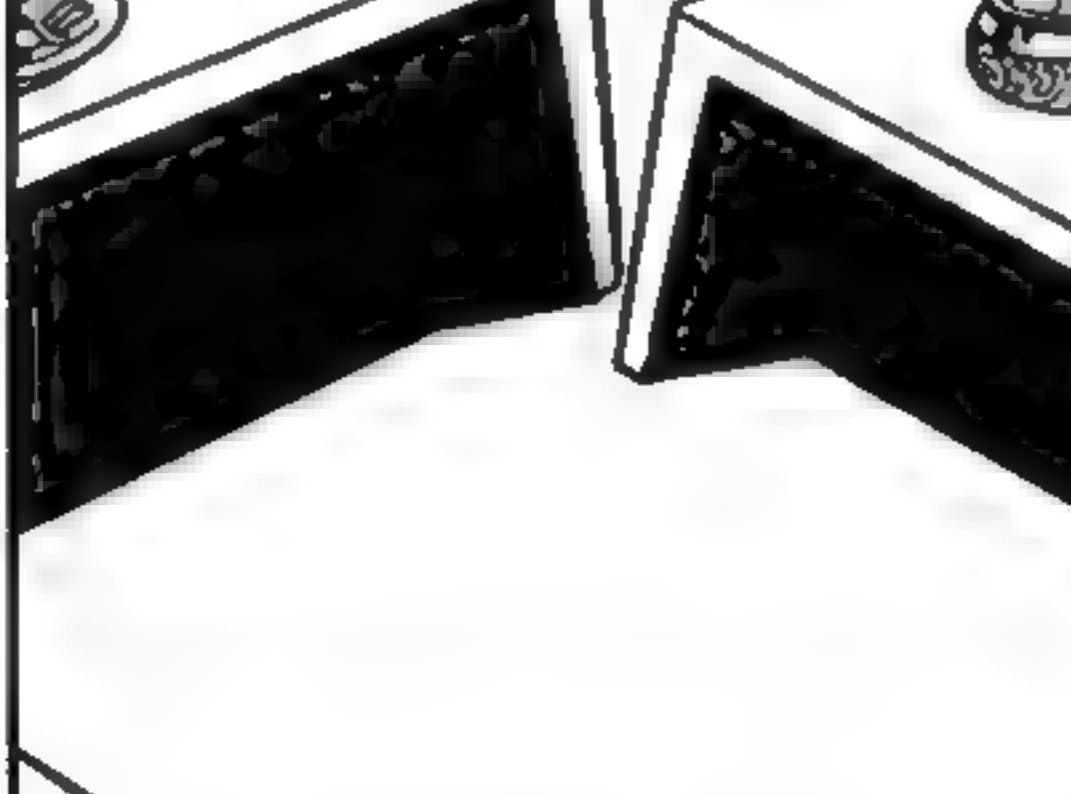
IF I MAY INTRUDE, IT IS INAUSPICIOUS TO SPILL BLOOD BEFORE MARRIAGE, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT WILL JOIN OUR TWO STATES IN PEACE.

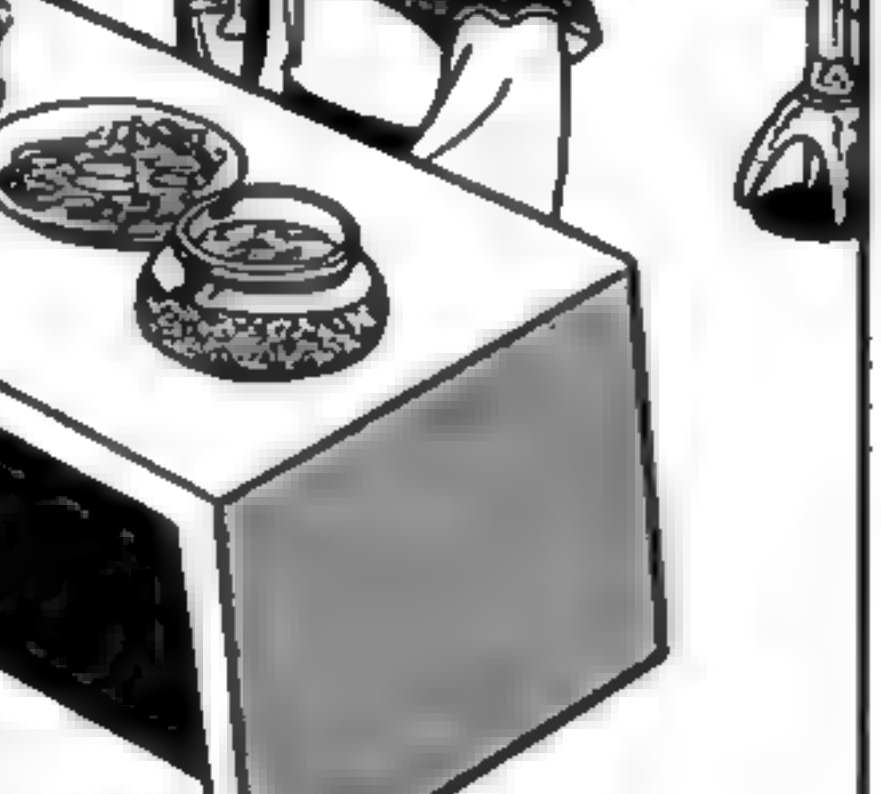



YES, MY LORD.
JIA HUA! TAKE YOUR SOLDIERS AND WITHDRAW FROM HERE!


PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR THAT UGLY INCIDENT. I HOPE YOU CAN NOW FEEL A LITTLE MORE AT EASE, HOWEVER.


I THINK I MIGHT HAVE DRANK A LITTLE TOO MUCH. PLEASE EXCUSE ME WHILE I TAKE A SHORT NIGHT STROLL TO SOBER UP.


YES.
MY LORD, PLEASE CARRY THIS SWORD JUST IN CASE. I'M SURE WE'RE NOT YET COMPLETELY FREE FROM DANGER.


WHEW...

FEAR NOT, MY LORD. I SHALL PROTECT YOU WITH MY LIFE.

SUN QUAN WILL MOST LIKELY TRY ANOTHER ATTEMPT ON MY LIFE IF HE SEES A CHANCE...





?

IF MY AMBITIONS ARE TO NEVER BE REALIZED, THEN LET THIS ROCK DEFLECT MY BLADE. BUT IF THEY ARE TO BE REALIZED ONE DAY, THEN LET THIS ROCK BE SPLIT IN HALF.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MATTER? DO YOU HOLD SOME PERSONAL GRUDGE AGAINST THAT ROCK?

I-IT SPLIT IN HALF...!

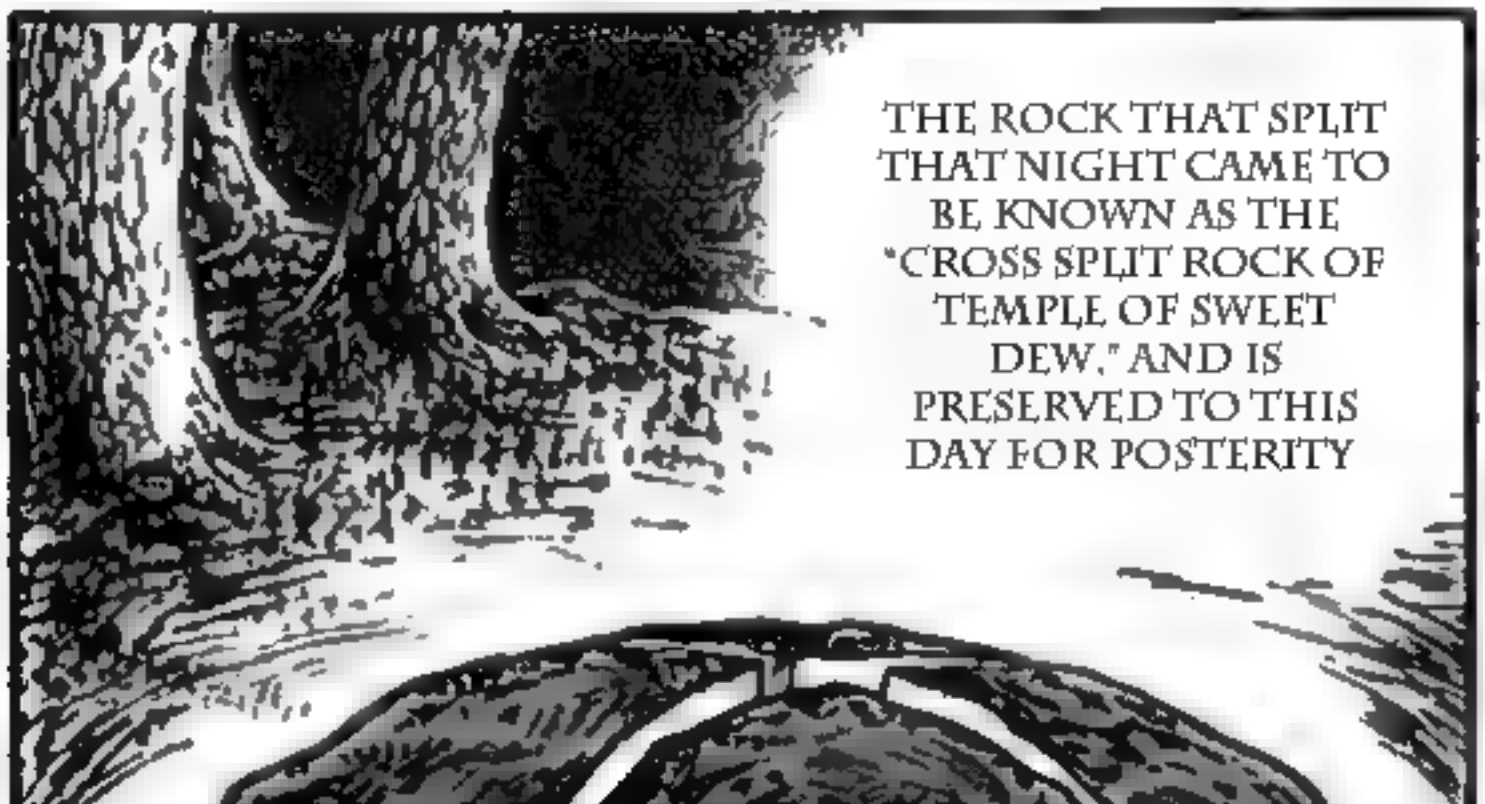
NO, I PRAYED TO THE HEAVENS TO LET THIS ROCK BE SPLIT IN HALF BY MY BLADE IF AND ONLY IF OUR UNION WILL ALLOW US TO DESTROY CAO CAO.

OH? THAT SOUNDS QUITE INTERESTING. I SHALL HAVE A GO AT IT MYSELF AS WELL THEN.





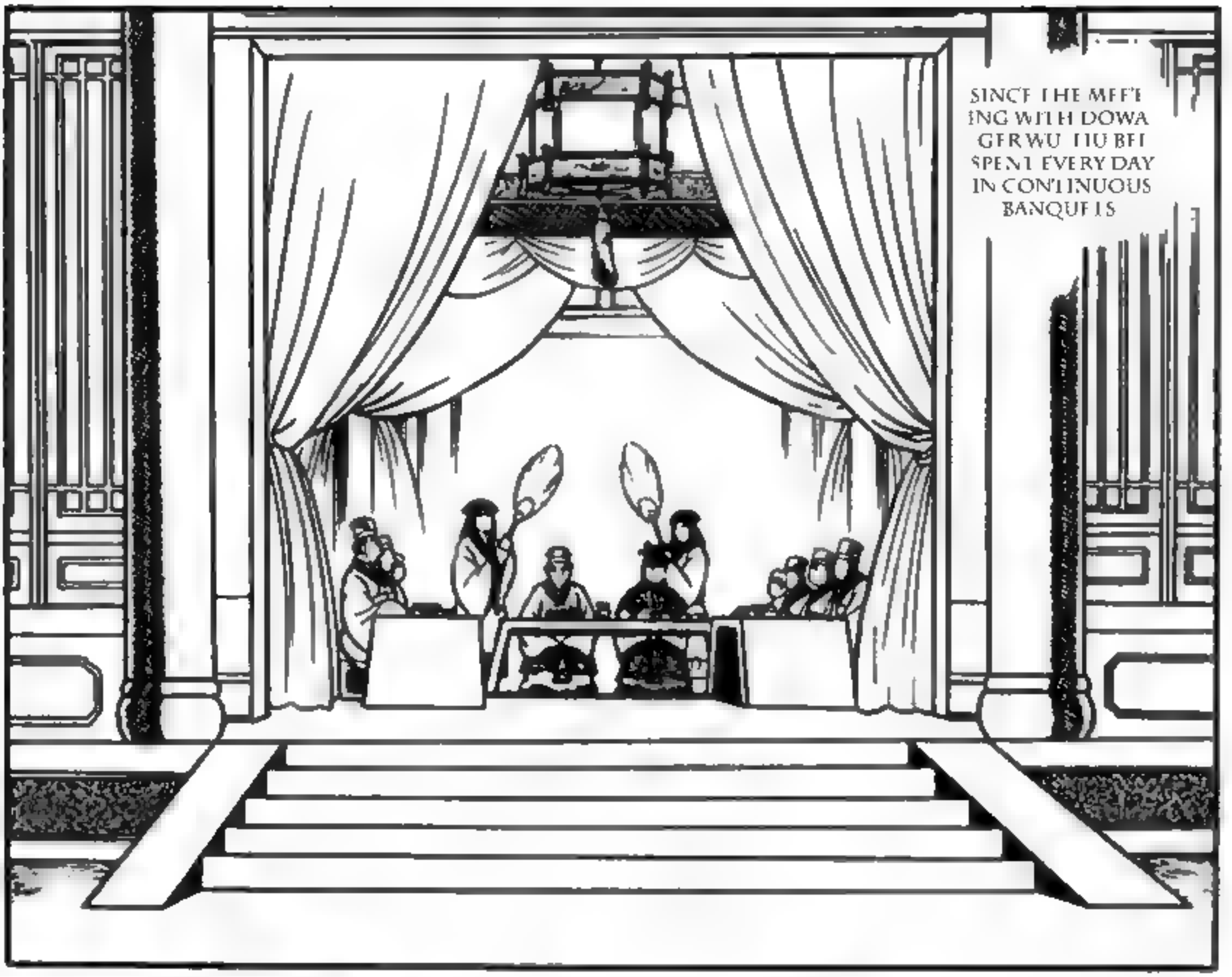


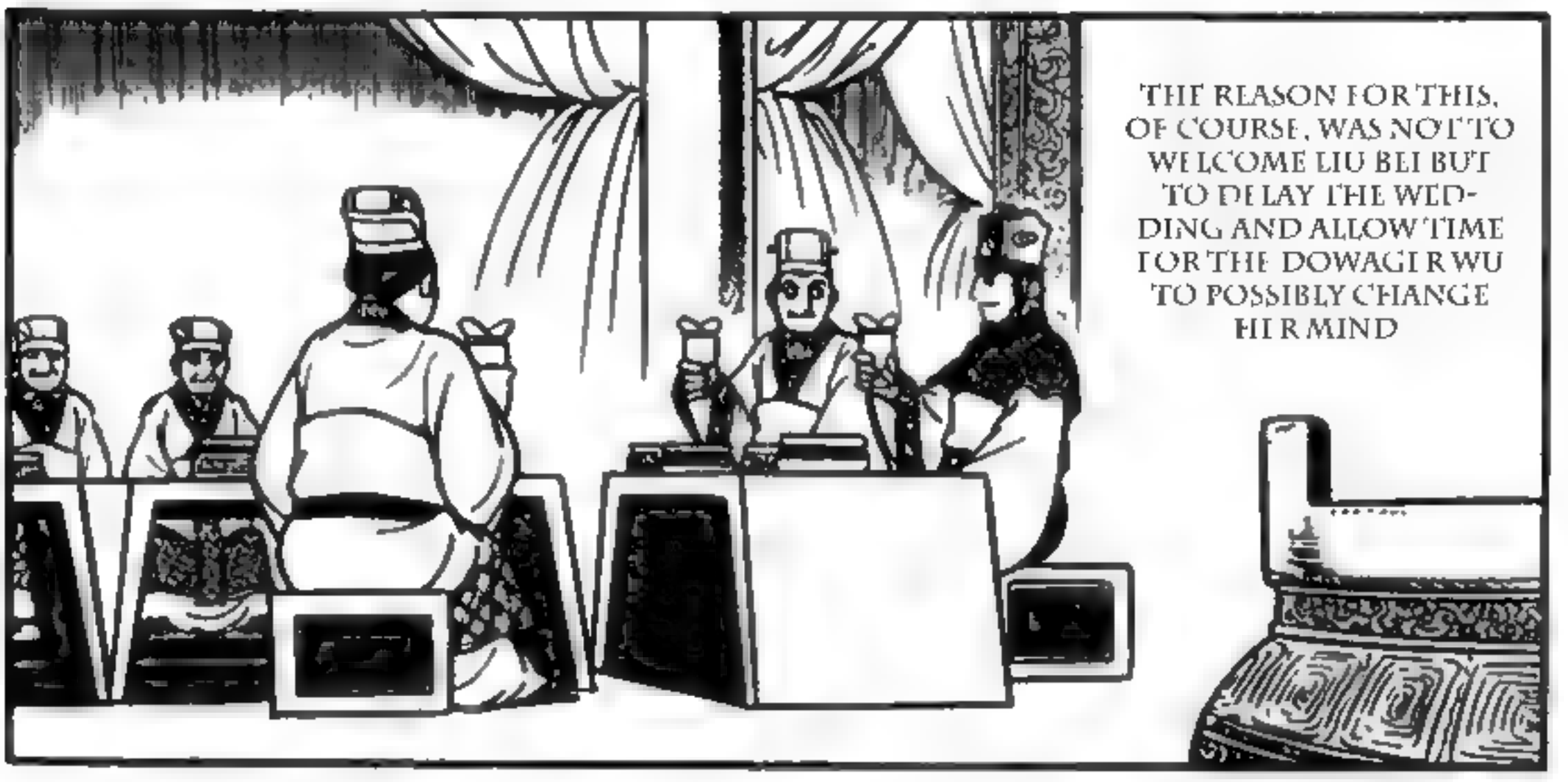

THE ROCK THAT SPLIT THAT NIGHT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE "CROSS SPLIT ROCK OF TEMPLE OF SWEET DEW," AND IS PRESERVED TO THIS DAY FOR POSTERITY


IT SPLIT!


INDEED...

DECAY

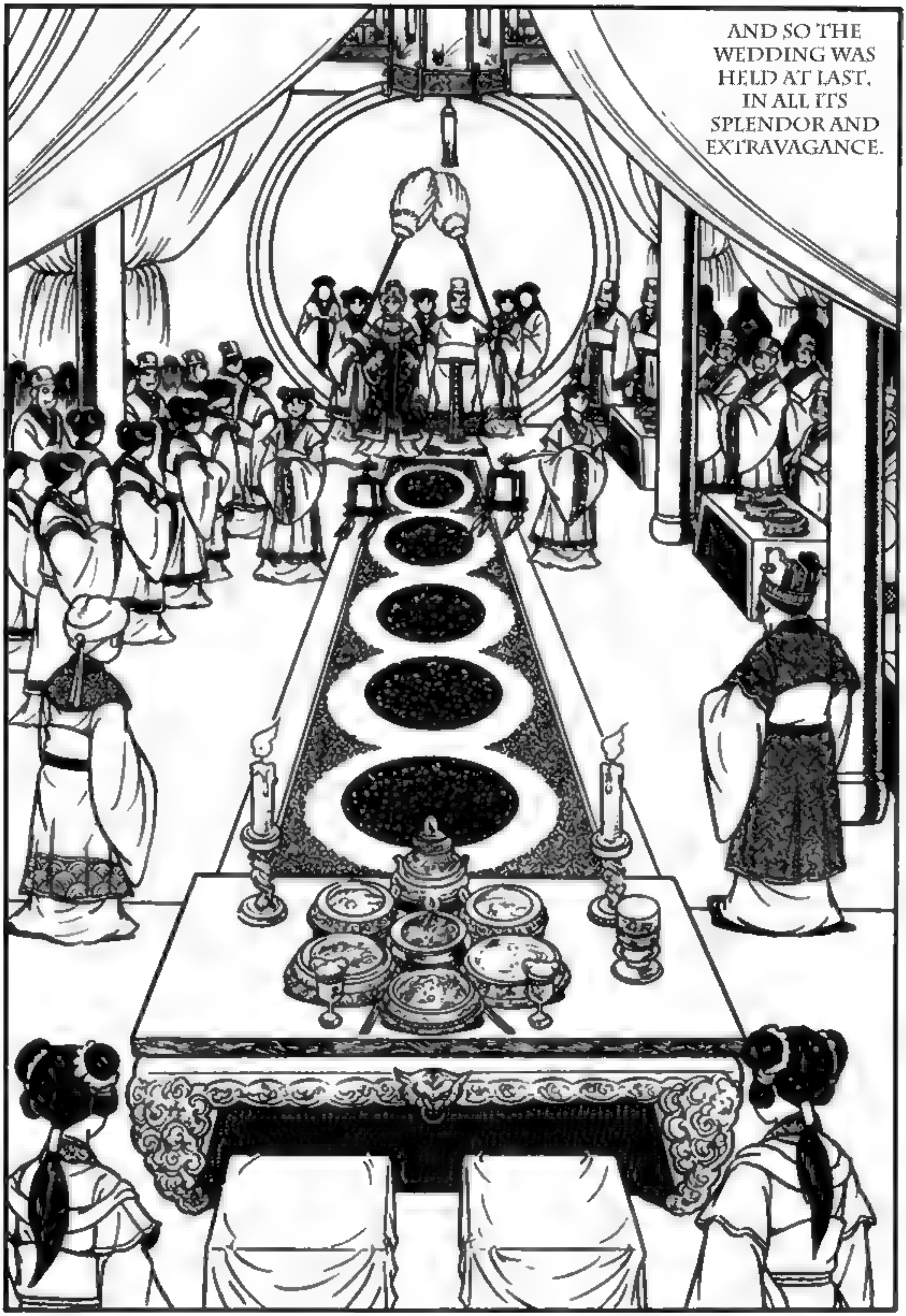

SINCE THE MEETING WITH DOWAGER WU LIU BEI SPENT EVERY DAY IN CONTINUOUS BANQUETS

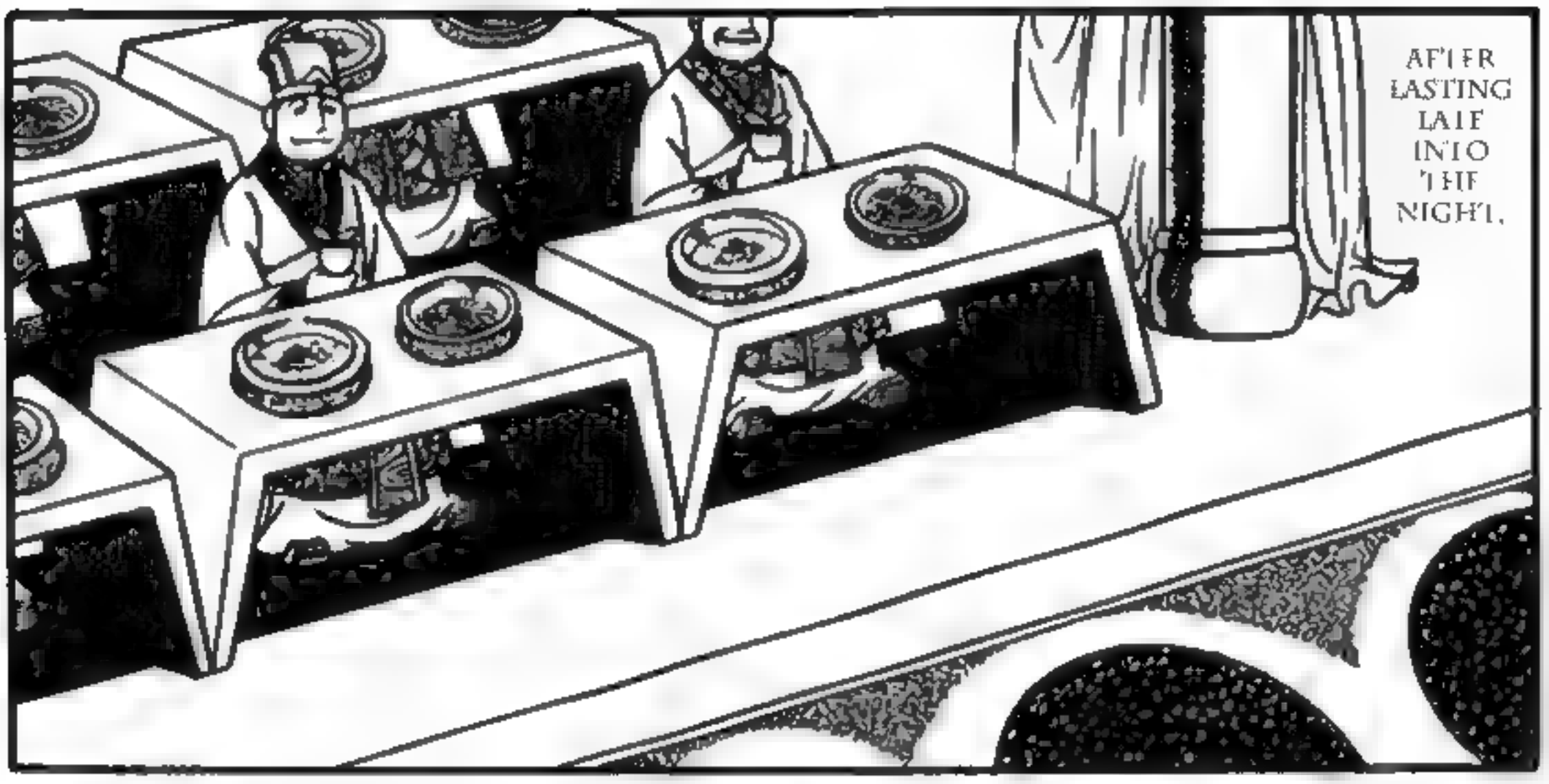

THE REASON FOR THIS, OF COURSE, WAS NOT TO WELCOME LIU BEI BUT TO DELAY THE WEDDING AND ALLOW TIME FOR THE DOWAGER WU TO POSSIBLY CHANGE HER MIND

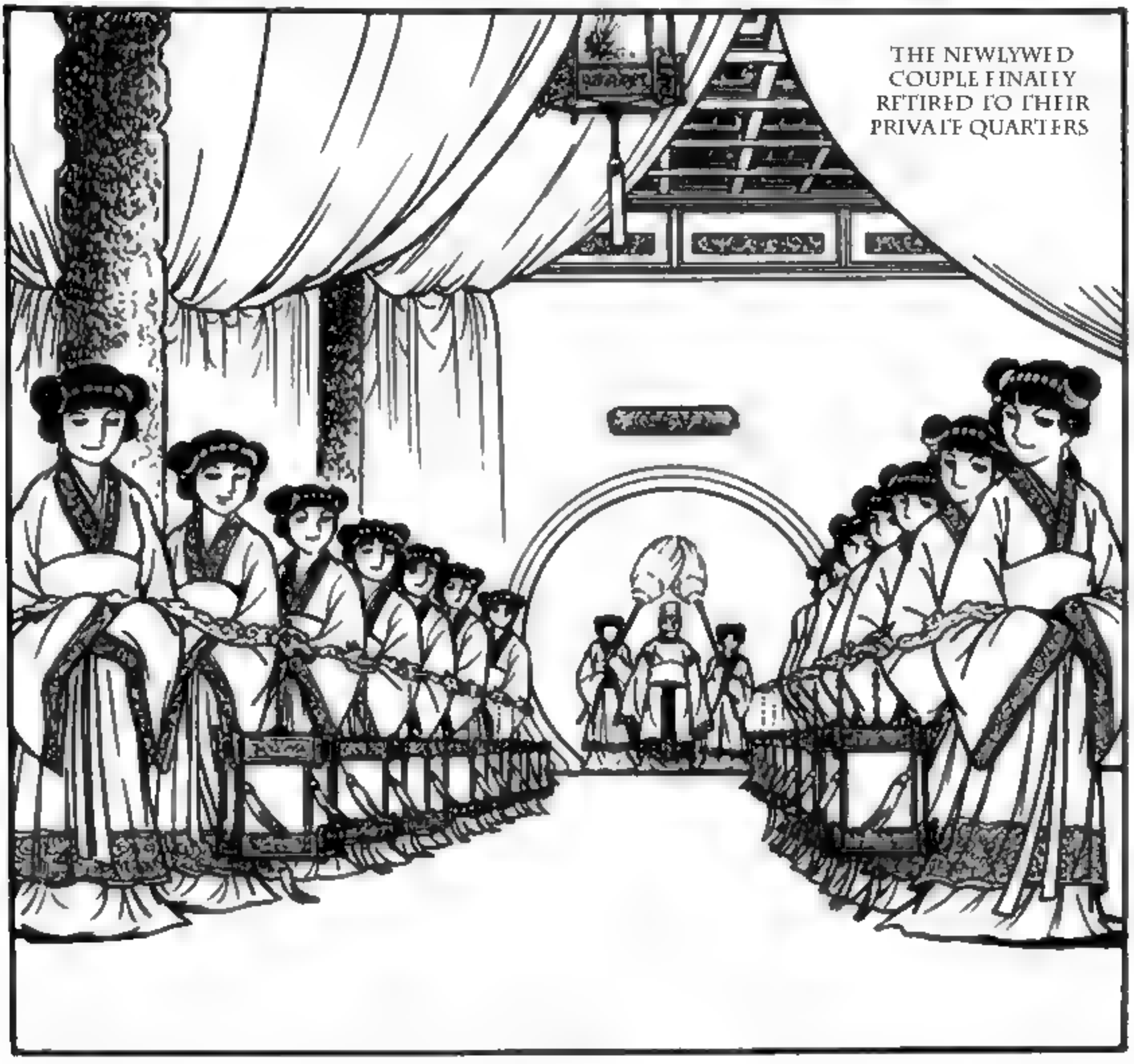
THERE WAS ALSO THE ADDITIONAL MOTIVE OF TRYING TO FIND FAULT WITH LIU BEI IN ORDER TO COME UP WITH A JUSTIFIABLE EXCUSE FOR HIS MURDER THAT THE PEOPLE COULD ACCEPT

STATE PATRIARCH QIAO SPOKE WITH DOWAGER WU TO HAVE THE WEDDING EARLIER

SUSPECTING SUCH ILL INTENTIONS,


AND SO THE WEDDING WAS HELD AT LAST, IN ALL ITS SPLENDOR AND EXTRAVAGANCE.


AFTER LASTING LATE INTO THE NIGHT,


THE NEWLYWED COUPLE FINALLY RETIRED TO THEIR PRIVATE QUARTERS

WHILE SUN QUAN COULD ONLY WATCH WITH BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT

DOWAGER WU SMILED PLEASANTLY AT THE IMPENDING CONSUMMATION.

THANK YOU.

AND THIS IS YOUR BEDROOM, SIR.

AH!

TEE HEE!

W-WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH ME!?

THESE ARE MERELY LADY SUN'S PERSONAL ATTENDANTS.

HER WAITING-GIRLS!? BUT THEN WHAT IS WITH THEIR WEAPONS AND OUTFITS?

BEING INFATUATED WITH MARTIAL ARTS AND WAR, LADY SUN ALWAYS ORDERS HER ATTENDANTS TO DRESS THAT WAY.

THEN I SHALL GO INFORM LADY SUN AS SUCH.

THOUGH I RESPECT HER PERSONAL TASTES, I'M AFRAID IT IS RATHER HARD FOR ME TO RELAX WITH ARMED GUARDS IN THE BEDROOM.

THE BRIDEGROOM STATES THAT HE FEELS UNEASY AT THE ARMED ATTENDANTS IN THE BEDROOM.

WHAT IS IT?

MILADY.

FINE. HAVE MY ATTENDANTS UNARM THEMSELVES AS HE WISHES.

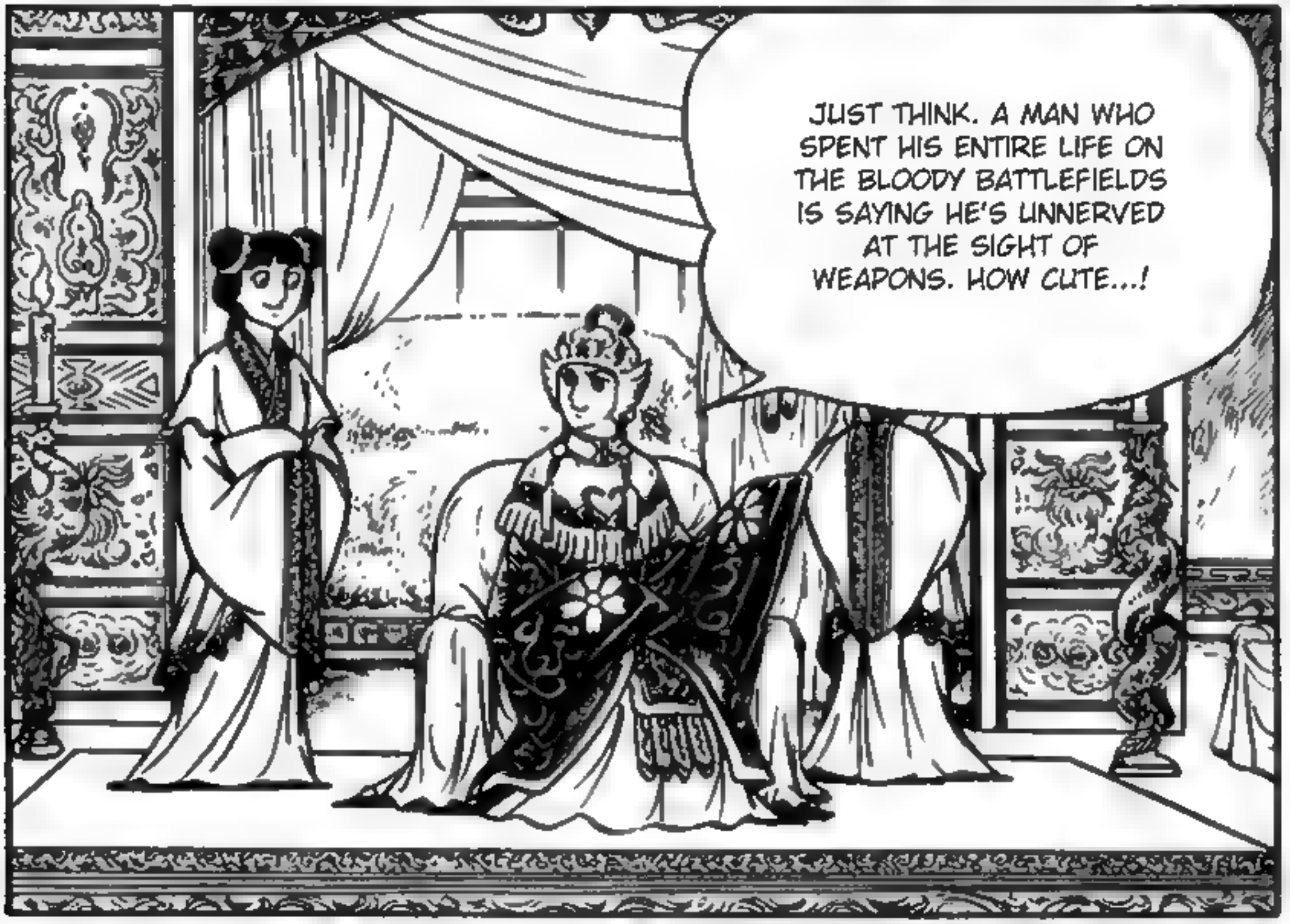
OH?

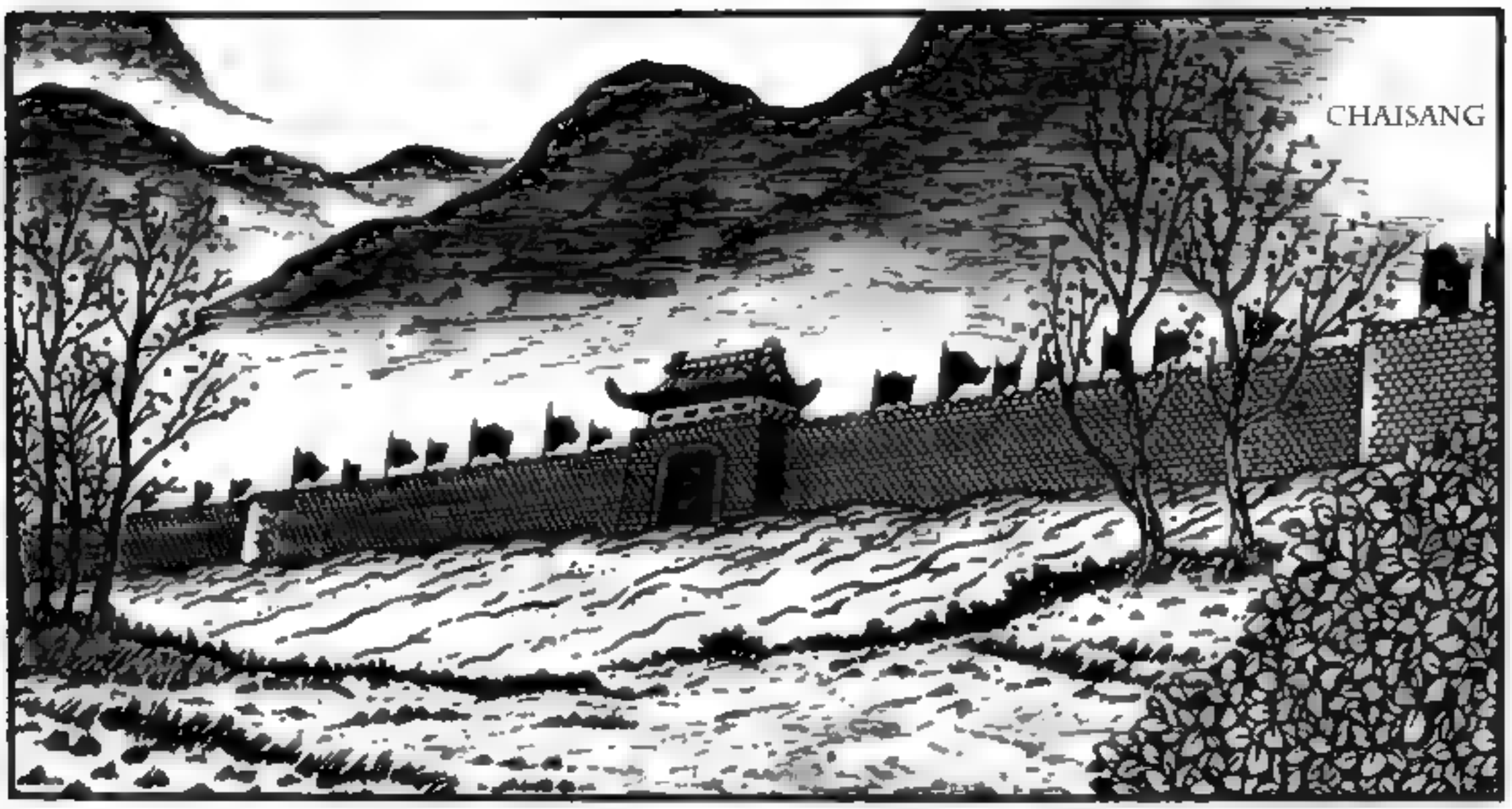


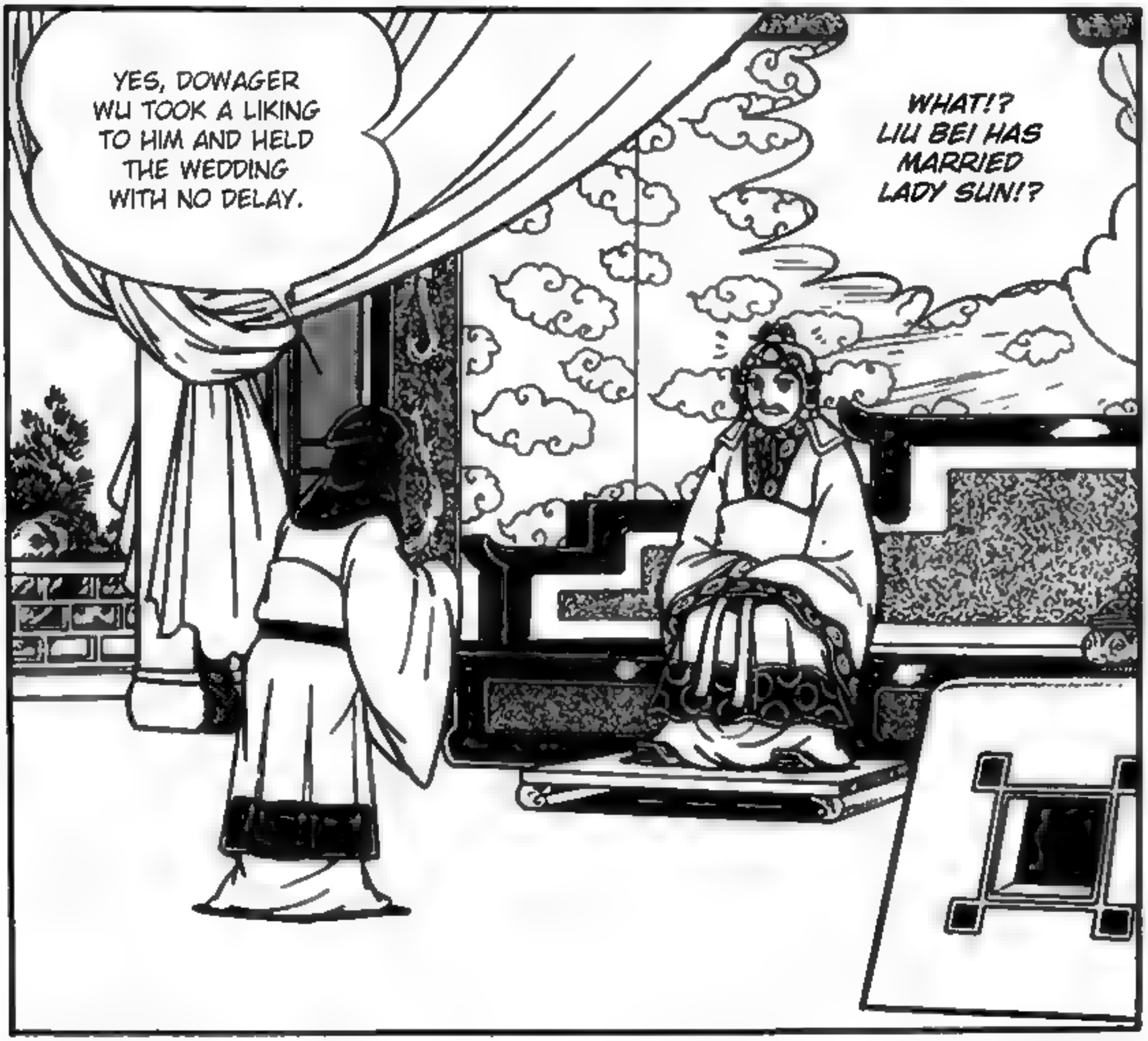

YES, MILADY.


WHAT DO YOU FIND SO HUMOROUS, MILADY?


HAHA!


JUST THINK. A MAN WHO SPENT HIS ENTIRE LIFE ON THE BLOODY BATTLEFIELDS IS SAYING HE'S UNNERVED AT THE SIGHT OF WEAPONS. HOW CUTE...!


CHAISANG


YES, DOWAGER WU TOOK A LIKING TO HIM AND HELD THE WEDDING WITH NO DELAY.
WHAT!? LIU BEI HAS MARRIED LADY SUN!?

MY PLAN BACKFIRED TERRIBLY...

T-THIS CAN'T BE... A 50 YEAR OLD MAN MARRYING A 17 YEAR OLD GIRL... HOW COULD THE DOWAGER APPROVE OF SUCH A MARRIAGE!?

AT THIS RATE, WU WILL NEVER OBTAIN JINGZHOU.

YES, SIR.

WAIT RIGHT HERE. I'LL BE ASKING YOU TO DELIVER A LETTER TO OUR LORD SHORTLY.

NO, IT'S TOO EARLY TO GIVE UP. THERE MUST BE SOME OTHER WAY...

YES, THIS SHOULD DO...

IT APPEARS THAT MY PLAN HAS BACKFIRED TERRIBLY. PLEASE EXCUSE MYSELF FOR NOT COMING TO THE CAPITAL AND SOLVING THIS PROBLEM PERSONALLY AS I AM STILL RECOVERING FROM THE WOUND I RECEIVED FROM AN ARROW. BUT WORRY NOT, MY LORD, FOR I HAVE ANOTHER PLAN TO PROPOSE...

YES, SIR.

DELIVER THIS MESSAGE TO OUR LORD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

HMM...

HMM...

HMM...

ZHANG ZHAO, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS LETTER ZHOU YU HAS SENT?

IN SHORT, THE PLAN IS TO MAKE HIM FORGET ABOUT HIS RETAINERS AND AMBITION BY SPOILING HIM WITH WINE AND WOMEN. BUT DO YOU THINK THIS PLAN WILL SUCCEED?

LIU BEI IS A FORMIDABLE LEADER WHO INSPIRES LOYALTY IN BRAVE WARRIORS SUCH AS GUAN YU OR ZHANG FEI AS WELL AS IN WISE STRATEGISTS LIKE ZHUGE LIANG. THUS, HE WILL NOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE A MERE PAWN OR HOSTAGE OF WU FOR LONG. THAT IS WHY WE MUST APPEAL TO HIS SENSE OF SELF-IMPORTANCE BY LAVISHING HIM WITH ALL OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS. THIS WILL CAUSE HIM TO LOSE HIS AMBITION AS WELL AS THE PEOPLE'S HEARTS. AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHEN WE SHALL STRIKE.

YOU REALLY THINK SO?

YES, ZHOU YU HAS COME UP WITH A BRILLIANT IDEA.

THAT IS PRECISELY WHY HE IS MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THIS PLAN. GIVE HIM FINE WINE, A BEAUTIFUL DWELLING, GORGEOUS WOMEN, AND ALL THE BEST FOOD AND MUSIC THIS LAND HAS TO OFFER AND HIS HEART WILL QUICKLY ROT FROM SUCH DECADENCE. HIS ONCE-LOYAL RETAINERS WILL THEN BE GREATLY DISAPPOINTED AND LEAVE HIS SERVICE.

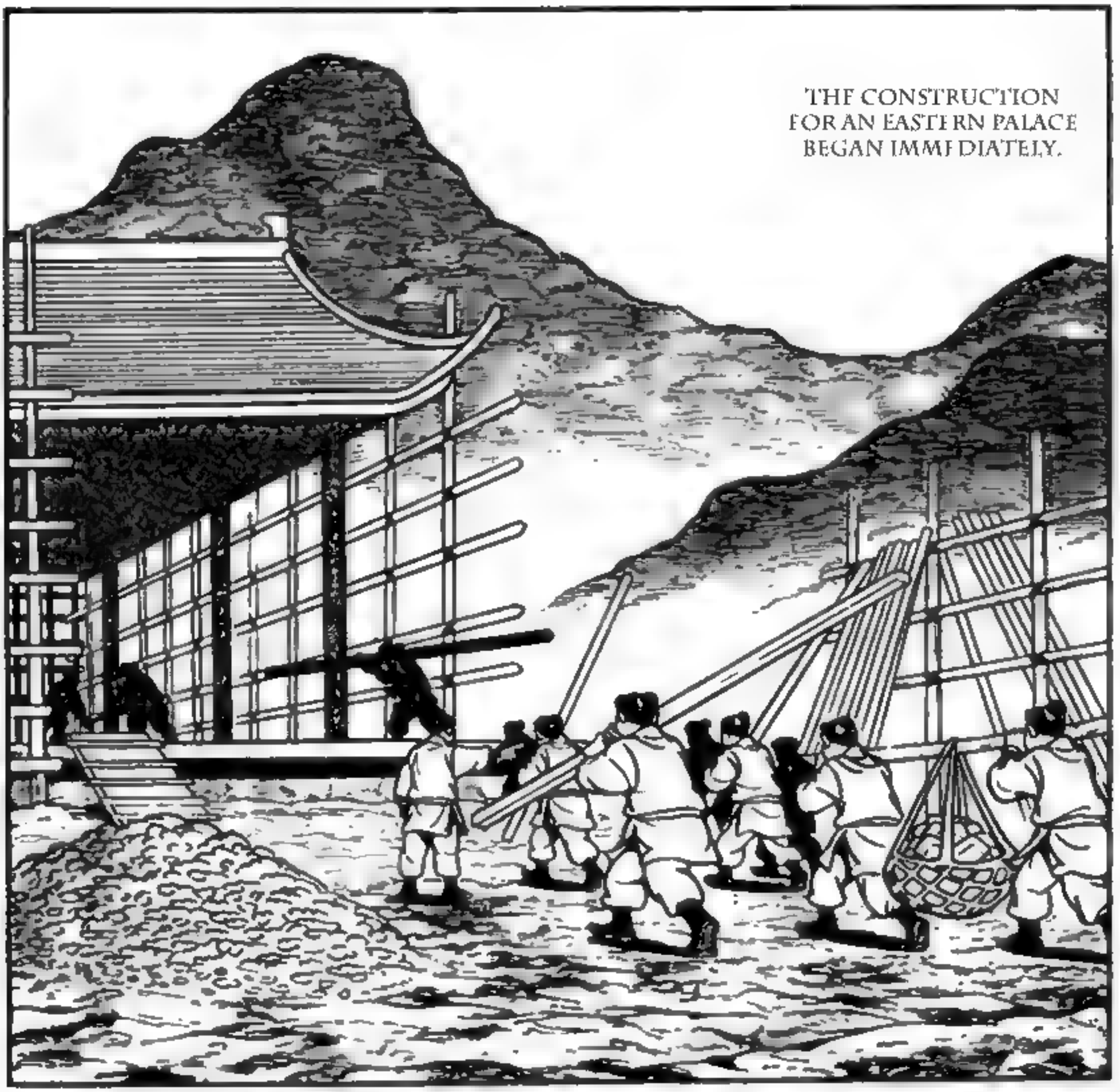
LIU BEI COMES FROM AN IMPOVERISHED BACKGROUND, AND AS A YOUNG MAN, HE ROAMED FROM ONE BATTLE-FIELD TO ANOTHER IN ORDER TO CARVE OUT A TERRITORY HE COULD CALL HIS OWN. HE HAS NEVER HAD THE TIME TO ENJOY A NOBLE'S LUXURIES.

FINE, LET US HAVE HIM DROWN IN DECADENCE.

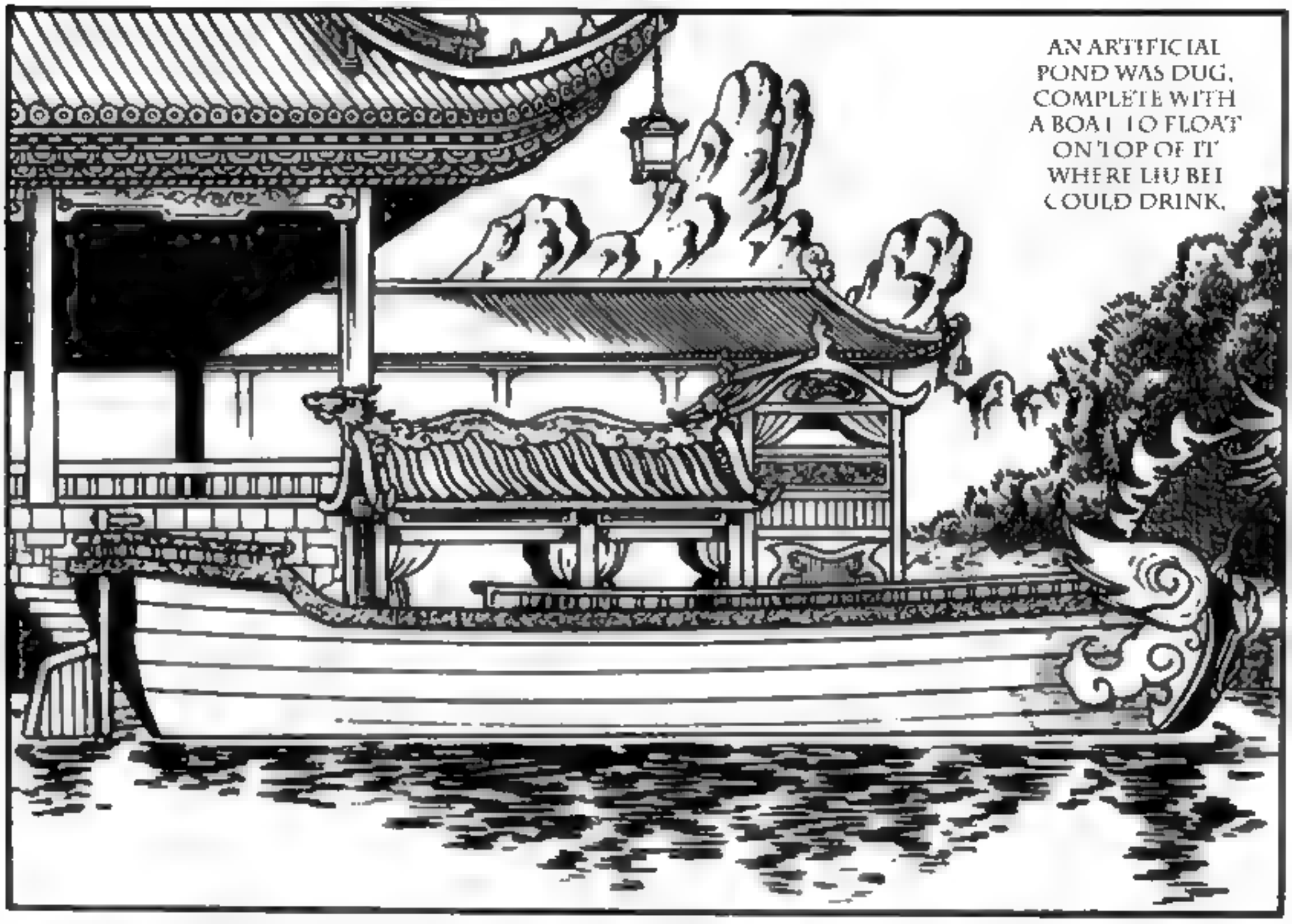
HMM...

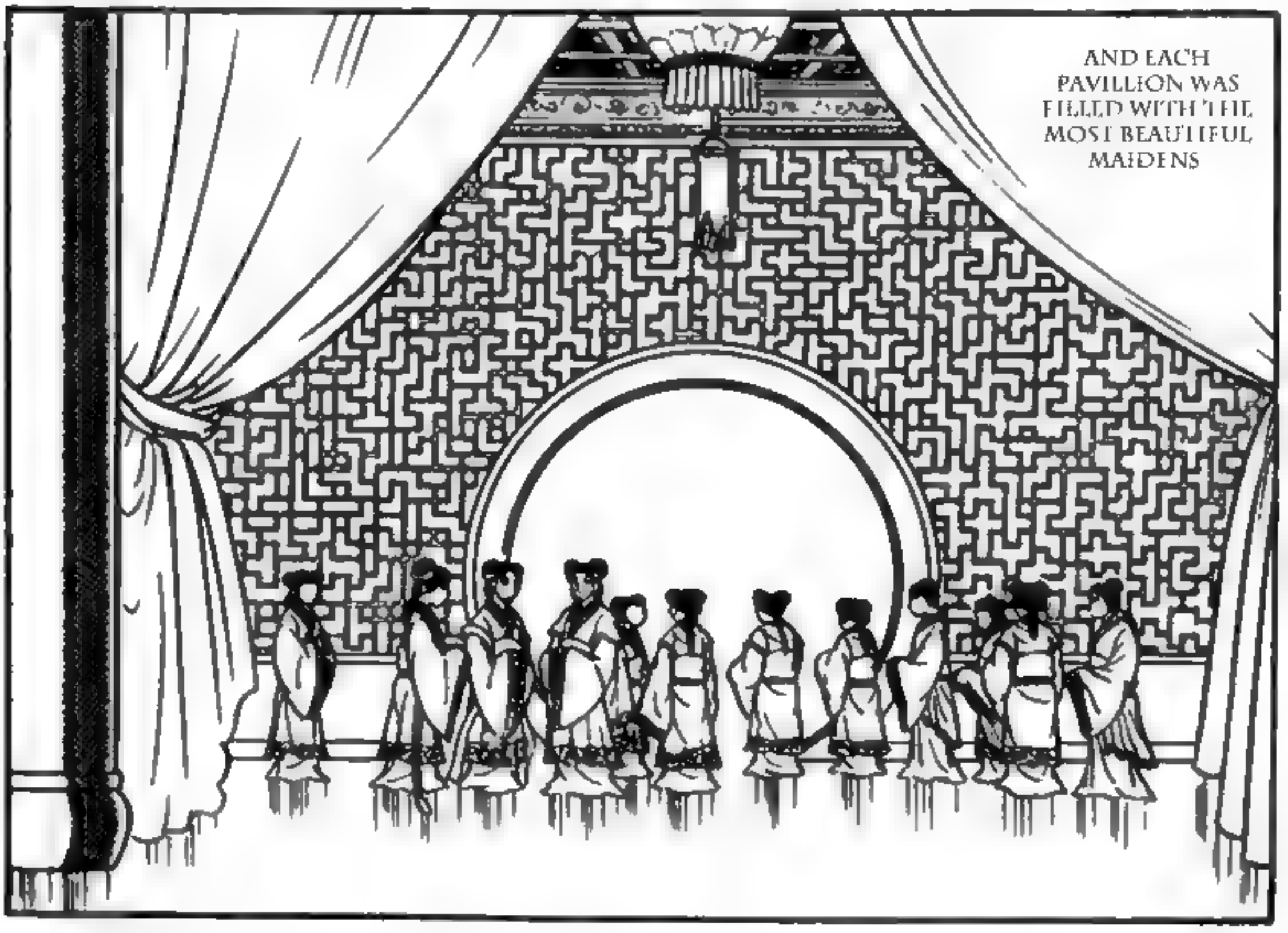
YES, MY LORD.

WE WILL BEGIN BY CONSTRUCT-ING A NEW PALACE FOR HIM.


THE CONSTRUCTION
FOR AN EASTERN PALACE
BEGAN IMMEDIATELY.


FLOWERS AND
TREES WERE
PLANTED IN
THE GARDEN,

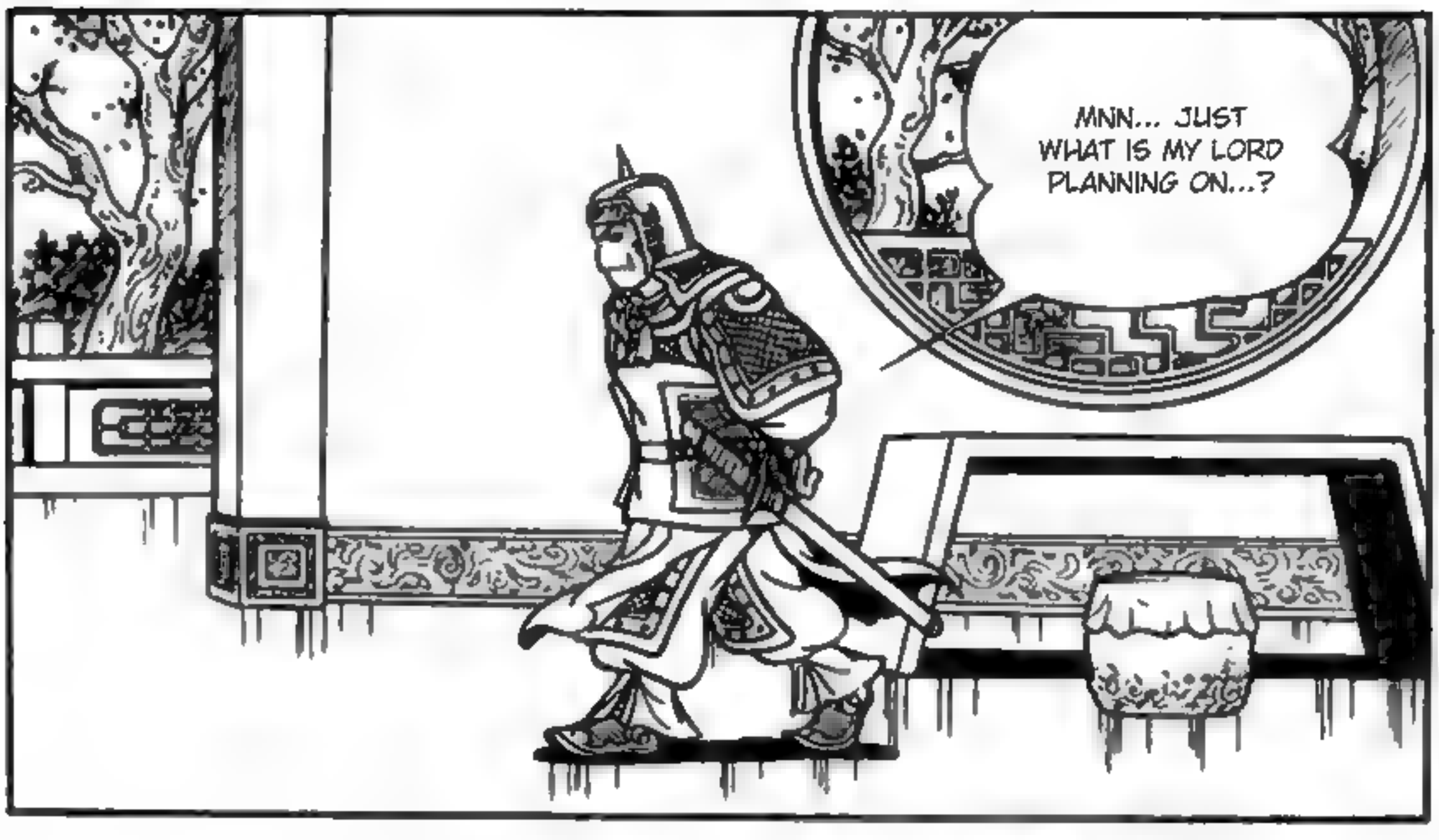

AN ARTIFICIAL POND WAS DUG, COMPLETE WITH A BOAT TO FLOAT ON TOP OF IT WHERE LIU BEI COULD DRINK.


AND EACH PAVILLION WAS FILLED WITH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS


YES, I'M VERY GRATEFUL.
IT SEEMS MY BROTHER STILL DOTES ON ME. TO THINK HE WOULD GO TO SUCH LENGTHS TO MAKE US HAPPY...!


TO LIU BEI, IT WAS A WORLD HE HAD NEVER EVEN DREAMED OF AND AS THE MONTHS BEGAN TO PASS, BIT BY BIT, HE SLOWLY LOST EVEN TRACK OF THE SEASONS

ESCAPE


MNN... JUST WHAT IS MY LORD PLANNING ON...?


I FEAR WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF HE STAYS HERE CAROUSING SO OFTEN...


HE COULDN'T HAVE FORGOTTEN ABOUT JINGZHOU, COULD HE? OR EVEN HIS AMBITION...?


THERE WERE STILL THOSE OTHER POUCHES KONGMING GAVE ME...
THAT'S RIGHT!
HMM...

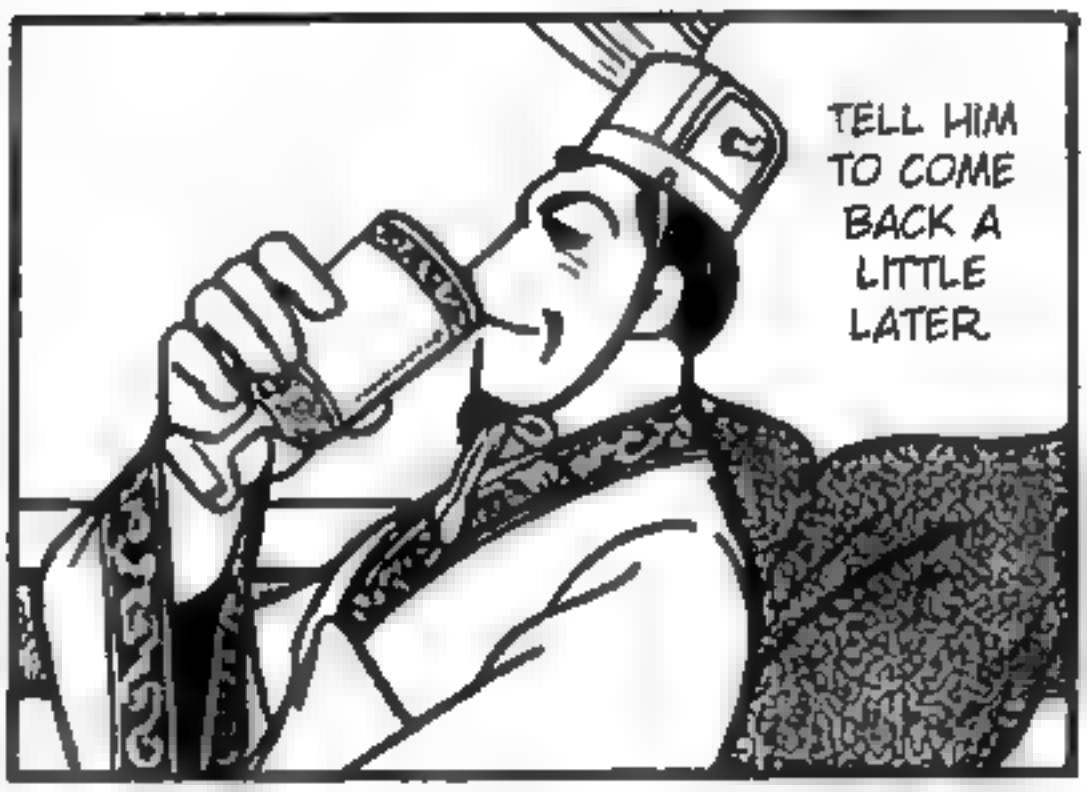
YES, WAIT RIGHT HERE.

PLEASE TELL LORD LIU BEI THAT I HAVE AN URGENT MESSAGE.

ZHAO YUN?

GENERAL ZHAO YUN WISHES TO SPEAK WITH YOU, SIR.


DEAR, YOU NEVER KNOW IF IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING IMPORTANT. YOU SHOULD GO SPEAK WITH HIM.


TELL HIM TO COME BACK A LITTLE LATER


MNN...


FINE, IF YOU SAY SO.


MY LORD! CAO CAO IS LEADING A NEW ARMY OF 50,000 TO JINGZHOU IN ORDER AVENGE HIS DEFEAT AT RED CLIFFS.
WHAT IS IT?

KONGMING SENT A MESSENGER BY BOAT.

WHO DID YOU HEAR THIS FROM!?

WHAT!?

Y-YES BUT NOW IS...

WE MUST RETURN TO JINGZHOU AT ONCE, MY LORD!

YES, I KNOW...

WHY DO YOU HESITATE, MY LORD? ALL OF JINGZHOU AND ITS CITIZENS ARE IN DANGER. THERE IS NO OTHER CHOICE!

FINE, FINE. YOU DON'T NEED TO GO THAT FAR.

BUT WAIT JUST A MOMENT. I MUST DISCUSS THIS WITH MY WIFE AS WELL.

I BEG OF YOU TO PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR FORMER SELF...

WORRY NOT, I AM AWARE OF THAT.

YOU CAN'T, MY LORD! SHE IS SURE TO PERSUADE YOU NOT TO LEAVE HER.

.....

DEAR, I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU.

HOW DID YOU KNOW!?

LET ME GUESS. YOU MUST RETURN TO JINGZHOU?

THE FACT IS, JINGZHOU IS IN CRISIS AND I MUST GO.

THEN I SHALL SPARE YOU THE LONG STORY.

I'VE BEEN EXEPECTING THIS TO HAPPEN EVENTUALLY.

YES, SPOKEN WISELY.

IF I WERE TO LOSE MY LANDS ALL BECAUSE I WAS HOPELESSLY IN LOVE, I WOULD BECOME A MOCKERY.

THESE PAST FEW MONTHS WITH YOU HAVE BEEN LIKE A DREAM BUT I MUST NOW RETURN TO THE BATTLE-FIELDS WHERE THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES. THUS, I CANNOT PROMISE YOU THAT I WILL RETURN.

THANK YOU FOR UNDER-STANDING.

I WOULD NEVER HAVE AGREED TO MARRY YOU IF I WEREN'T PREPARED FOR SUCH A SCENARIO.

WHATEVER ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THE BOND BETWEEN A HUSBAND AND WIFE IS NO TRIFLING THING. I WILL COME WITH YOU TO JINGZHOU SO THAT WE MAY BOTH LIVE AND DIE TOGETHER.

IS THAT NOT THE PROPER DUTY OF A WIFE?

YOU WISH TO LEAVE WITH ME...?

HOWEVER, I'M SURE I CAN CONVINCE MY MOTHER.

YES, BROTHER QUAN WILL LIKELY BE FURIOUS. THAT IS, IF HE FINDS OUT.

BUT I DOUBT YOUR BROTHER OR MOTHER WOULD ALLOW IT...

HM...

I HAVE A PLAN FOR THAT AS WELL.

BUT HOW DO WE SNEAK PAST THE CITY GATES...?

TOMORROW?

WE WILL LEAVE FIRST THING TOMORROW AS IT'S NEW YEAR'S DAY.

AN EXCELLENT PLAN! BUT LET ME FOREWARN YOU THAT ONCE YOU LEAVE HERE FOR THE CHAOTIC BATTLEFIELDS, YOU MAY COME TO LONG FOR THESE PEACEFUL DAYS IN LUXURY. PLEASE DO BE PREPARED.

AS A PIOUS WOMAN, MY MOTHER WILL GLADLY LET US LEAVE.

YES. TOMORROW MORNING, I WILL GO ASK MOTHER IF WE CAN GO TO THE RIVER TO PAY RESPECT TO OUR ANCESTORS FOR NEW YEAR'S.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND WORDS.

YES, I KNOW, BUT I'D RATHER LIVE OUT THERE WITH YOU THEN ALONE HERE.

SHE SAYS SHE'LL COME WITH US TO JINGZHOU.

ZHAO ZILONG, I'VE FINISHED DISCUSSING WITH MY WIFE.

YES, MY LORD.

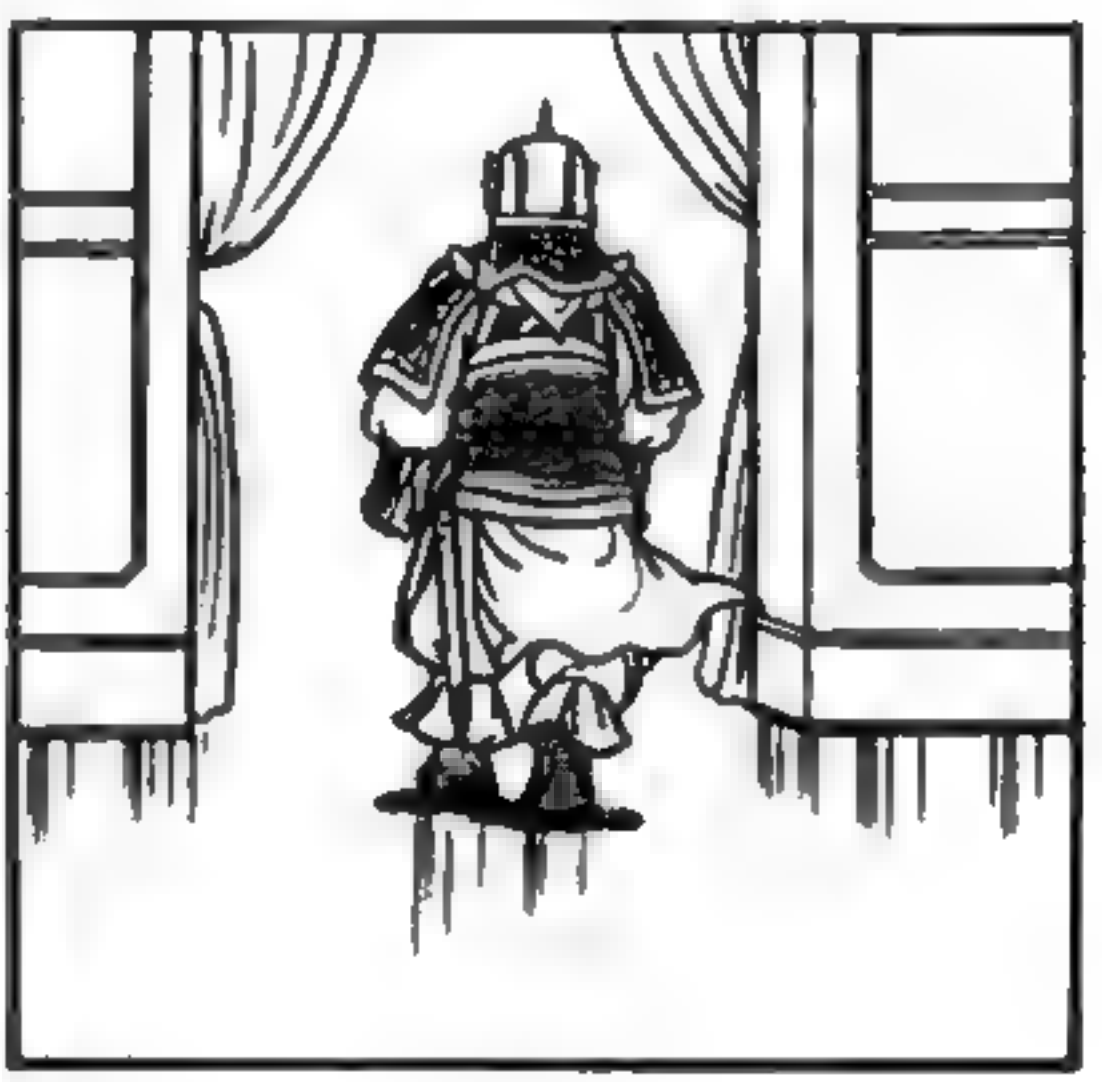
THE PLAN IS TO LEAVE THE CITY GATES ON THE PRETENSE OF GOING TO THE YANGTZE RIVER TO GIVE RITUALISTIC SACRIFICE FOR OUR ANCESTORS. I WANT YOU TO GO AHEAD AND WAIT FOR US TO ARRIVE.

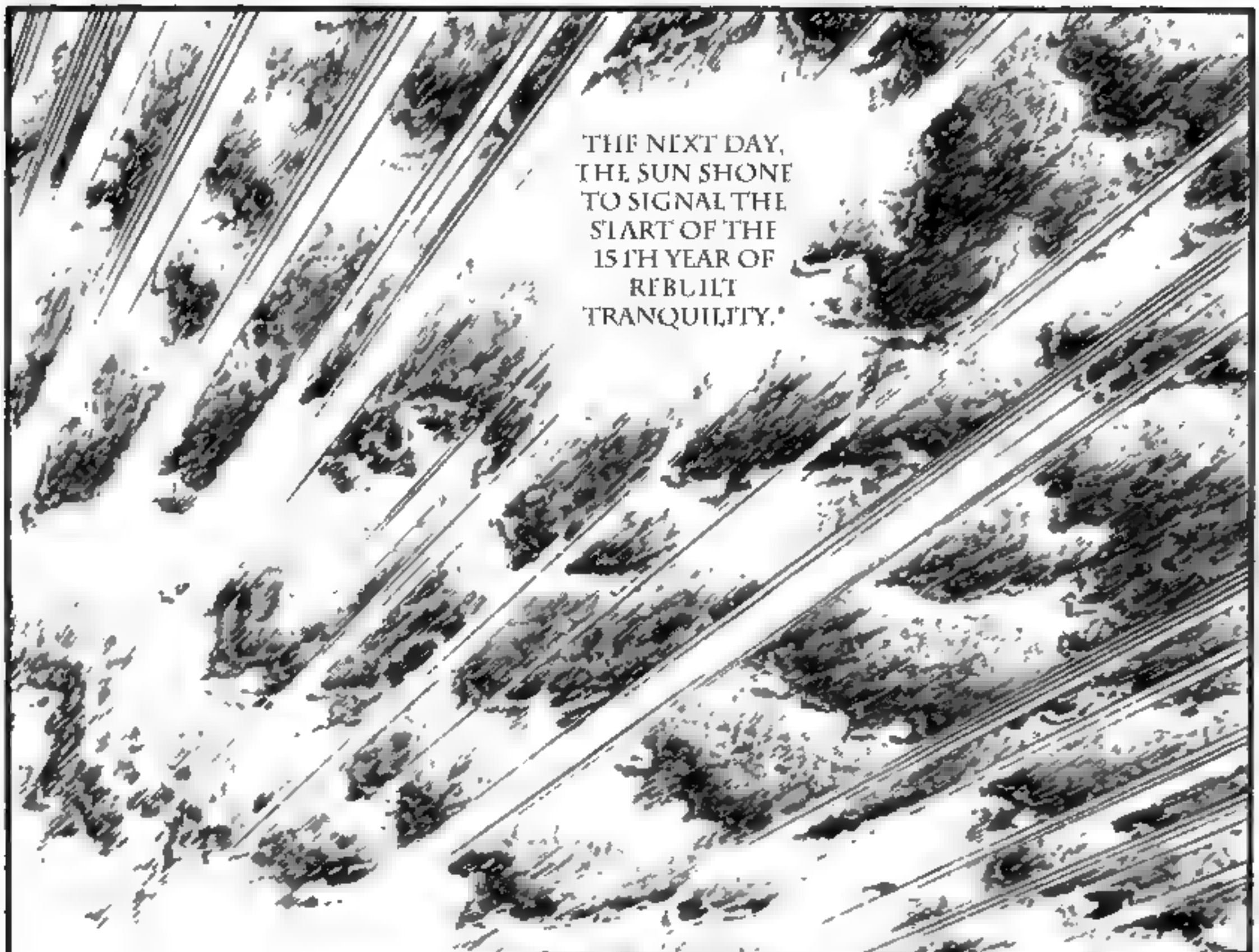

YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.

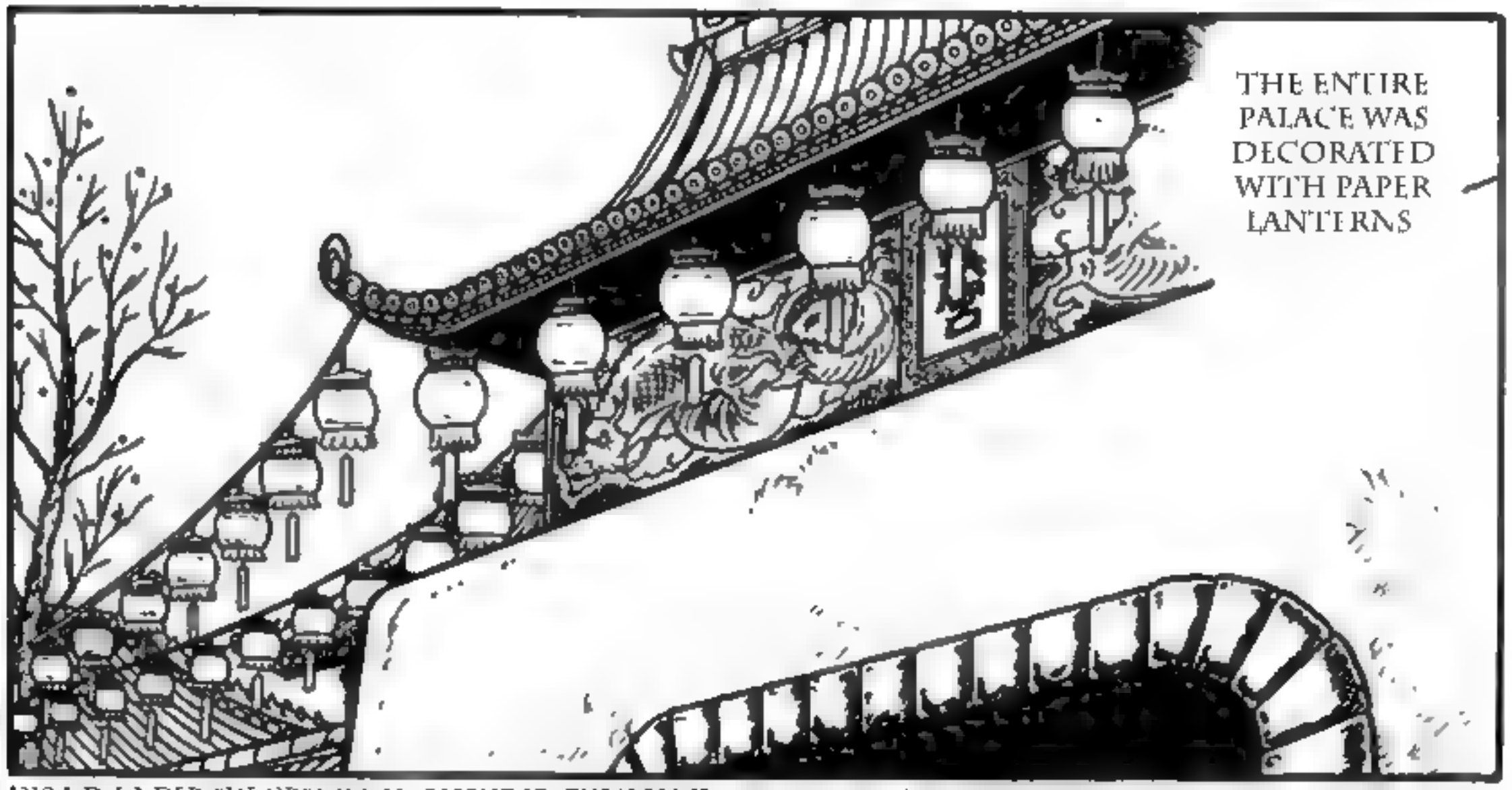

I HOPE YOU WILL HAVE NO SECOND THOUGHTS.


YES.
THEN I SHALL GO ON AHEAD.

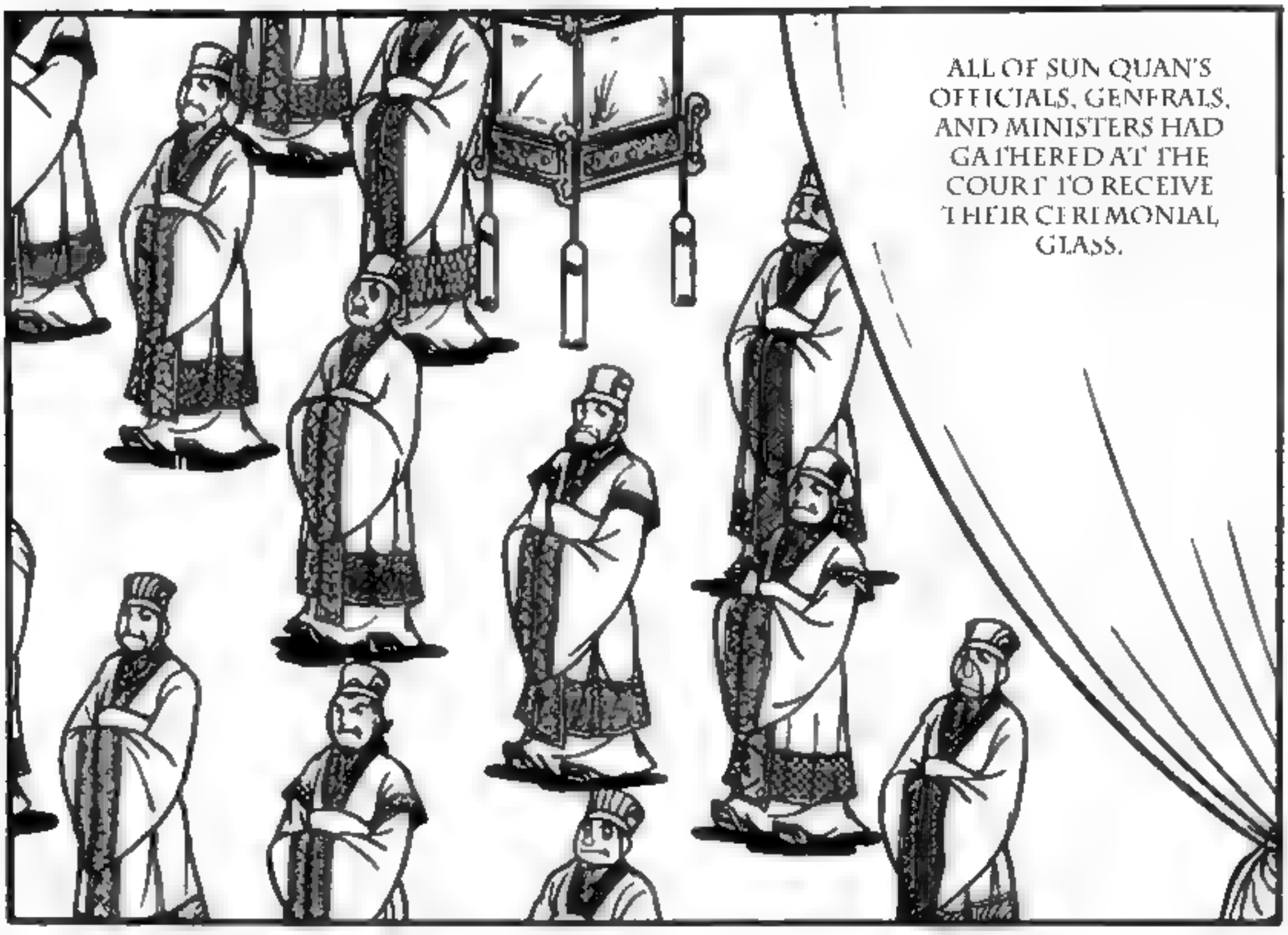


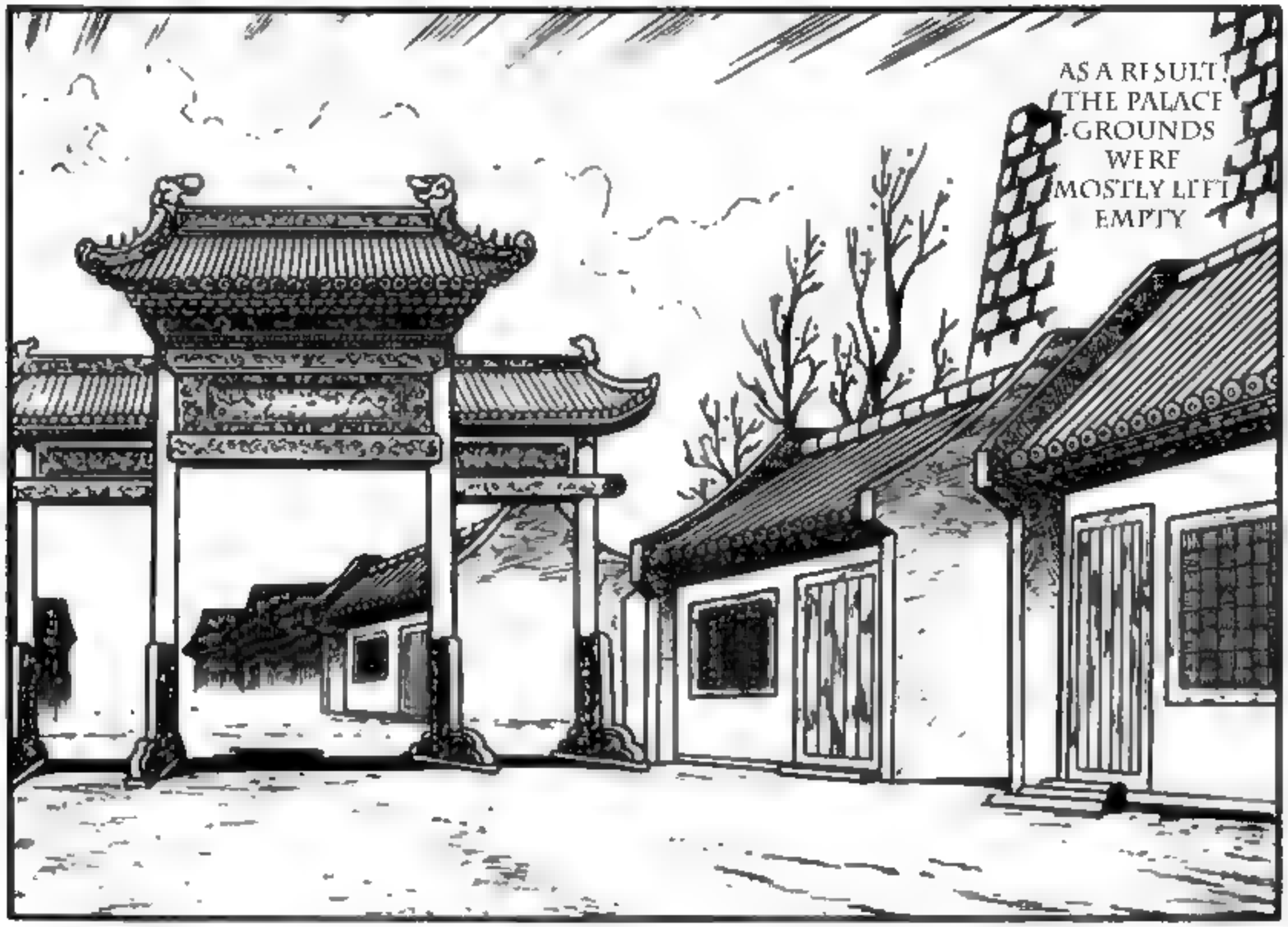






*210 A.D. UNDER THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR. THE "REBUILT TRANQUILITY" REFERS TO HOW MANY YEARS IT HAS BEEN SINCE THE END OF THE YELLOW TURBANS/SCARVES REBELLION


ALL OF SUN QUAN'S OFFICIALS, GENERALS, AND MINISTERS HAD GATHERED AT THE COURT TO RECEIVE THEIR CEREMONIAL GLASS.


AS A RESULT, THE PALACE GROUNDS WERE MOSTLY LEFT EMPTY


BUT AMIDST THESE EMPTY STREETS MARCHED LIU BEI AND HIS WIFE
劉


THOSE TWO SURE DO MAKE A GOOD COUPLE.


HERE COME THE NEWLYWEDS.

劉

GOOD, WE MADE IT OUT OF THE CITY WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE.

NOW LET'S HURRY.

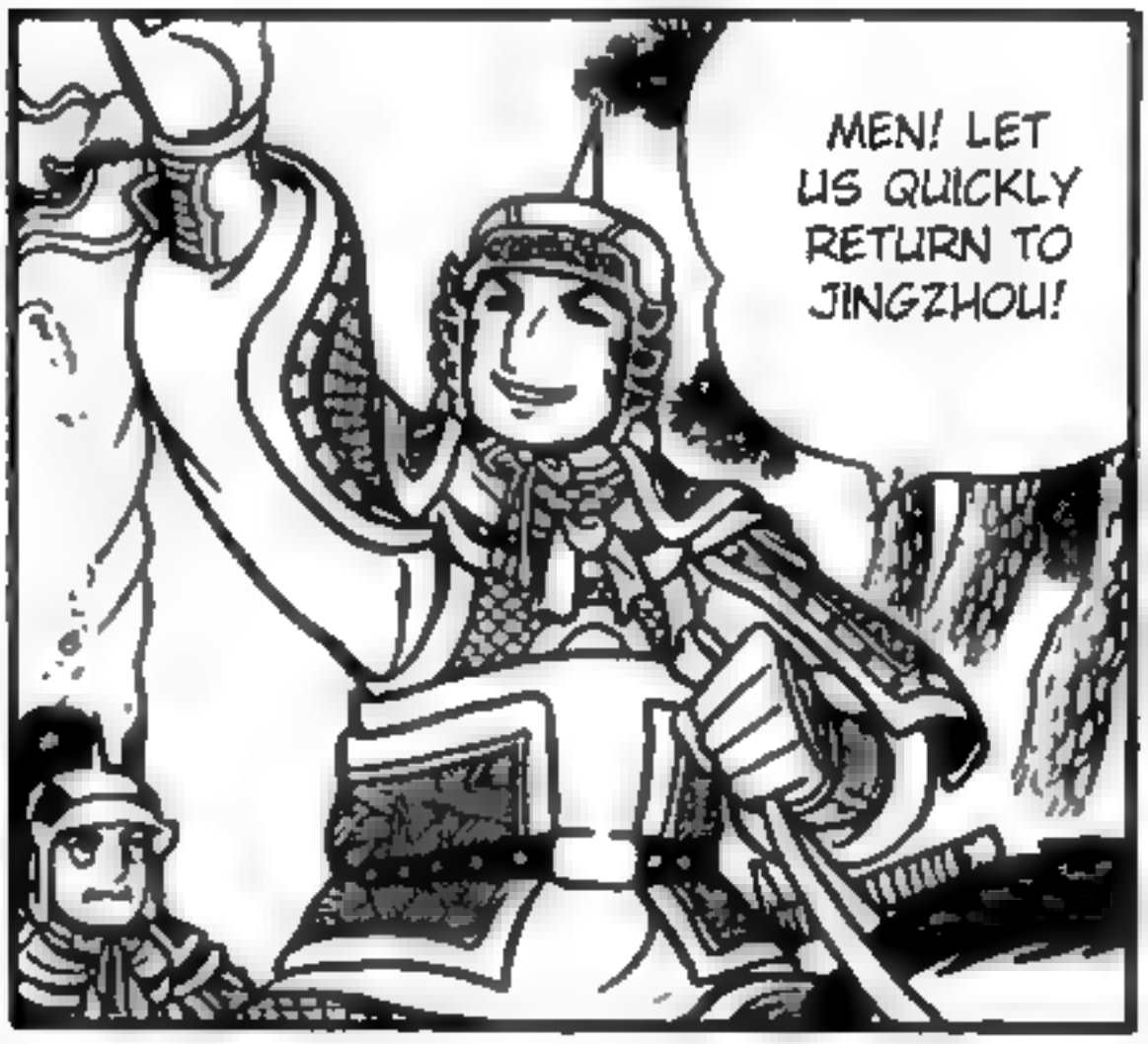
GEN-ERAL!



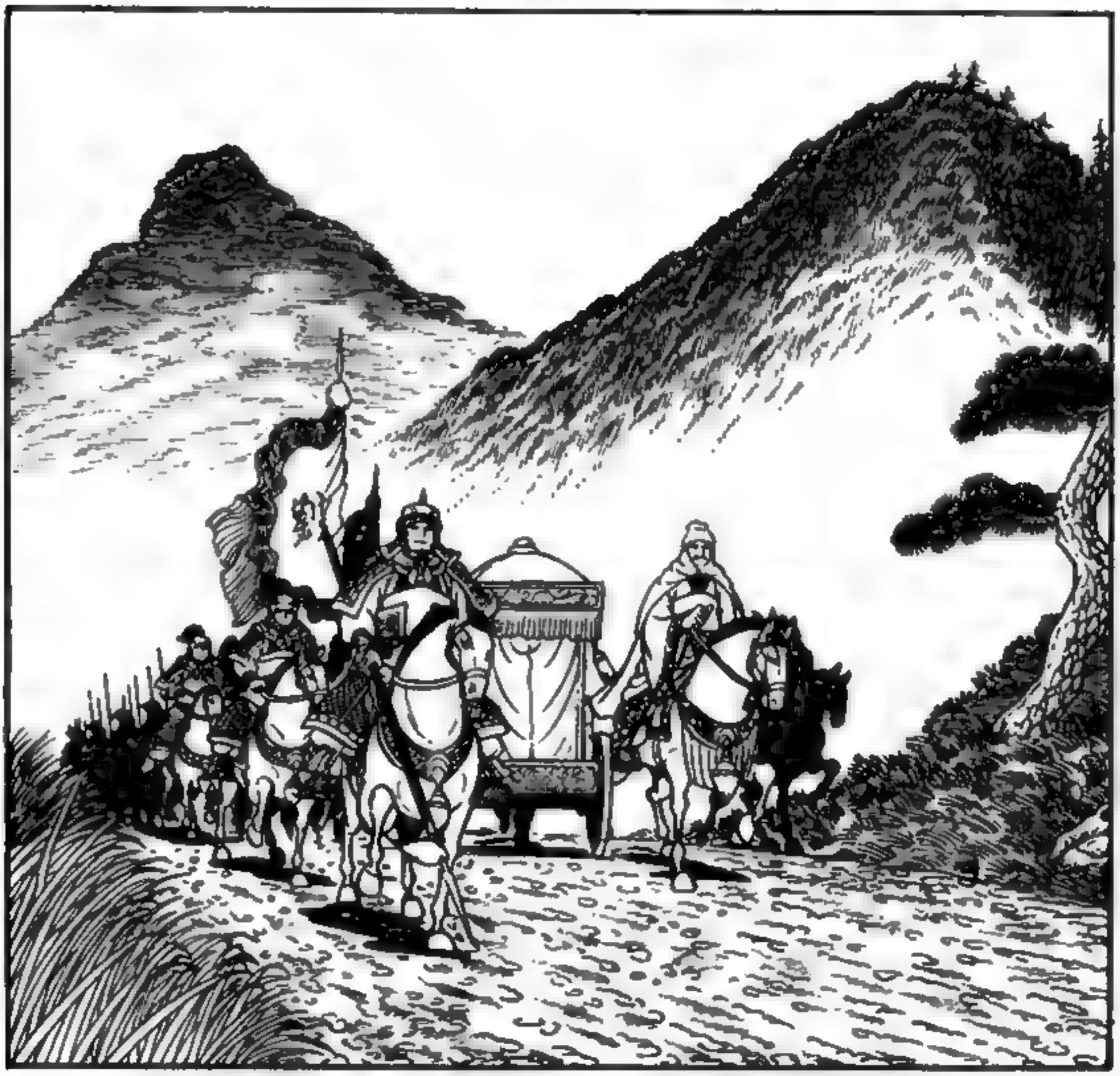

I WAS WORRIED THE PLAN MIGHT NOT GO SO WELL.


MY LORD!


WORRY NOT, I SHALL PROTECT YOU WITH EVERY LAST OF MY BREATH IF NEED BE.
YES, BUT IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THEY REALIZE WHAT HAPPENED AND SEND PURSUERS. WE MUST HURRY.


MEN! LET US QUICKLY RETURN TO JINGZHOU!





MEANWHILE, SUN QUAN WAS BUSY WITH THE NEW YEAR'S FESTIVITIES.

OF COURSE, SIR.

I MUST EXCUSE MYSELF TO TAKE A BRIEF NAP.

MNN... THAT WAS A FINE DRINK.

MNN...

HAHA, HE'S PROBABLY TOO DRUNK AND PREOCCUPIED WITH WOMEN TO EVEN REALIZE IT'S NEW YEAR'S!

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...

IS IT JUST ME OR HAS LIU BEI NOT SHOWN UP YET?

PLEASE HAVE SOMEONE GO BRING HIM HERE.

TRUE...

THAT MAY BE, BUT WHILE HE'S STILL HERE IN WU, HE MUST FOLLOW OUR LAWS AND CUSTOMS. AS SUCH, NOT GREETING OUR LORD FOR NEW YEAR'S WOULD MEAN GREAT DISRESPECT.

YES, ZHANG ZHAO.

I'M AFRAID LORD LIU BEI AND LADY SUN HAVE LEFT THE PALACE.

WE ARE HERE TO MEET WITH LIU BEI.

THEY LEFT EARLY MORNING FOR THE YANGTZE RIVER TO GIVE THE RITUAL SACRIFICE TO THEIR ANCESTORS.

LEFT? FOR WHERE?

LOOKS LIKE HE HASN'T LOST ALL SENSE OF REASON YET.

OH.

IS THAT SO?

IT APPEARS LIU BEI AND LADY SUN WENT TO THE RIVER TO PAY RESPECTS TO THEIR ANCESTORS.

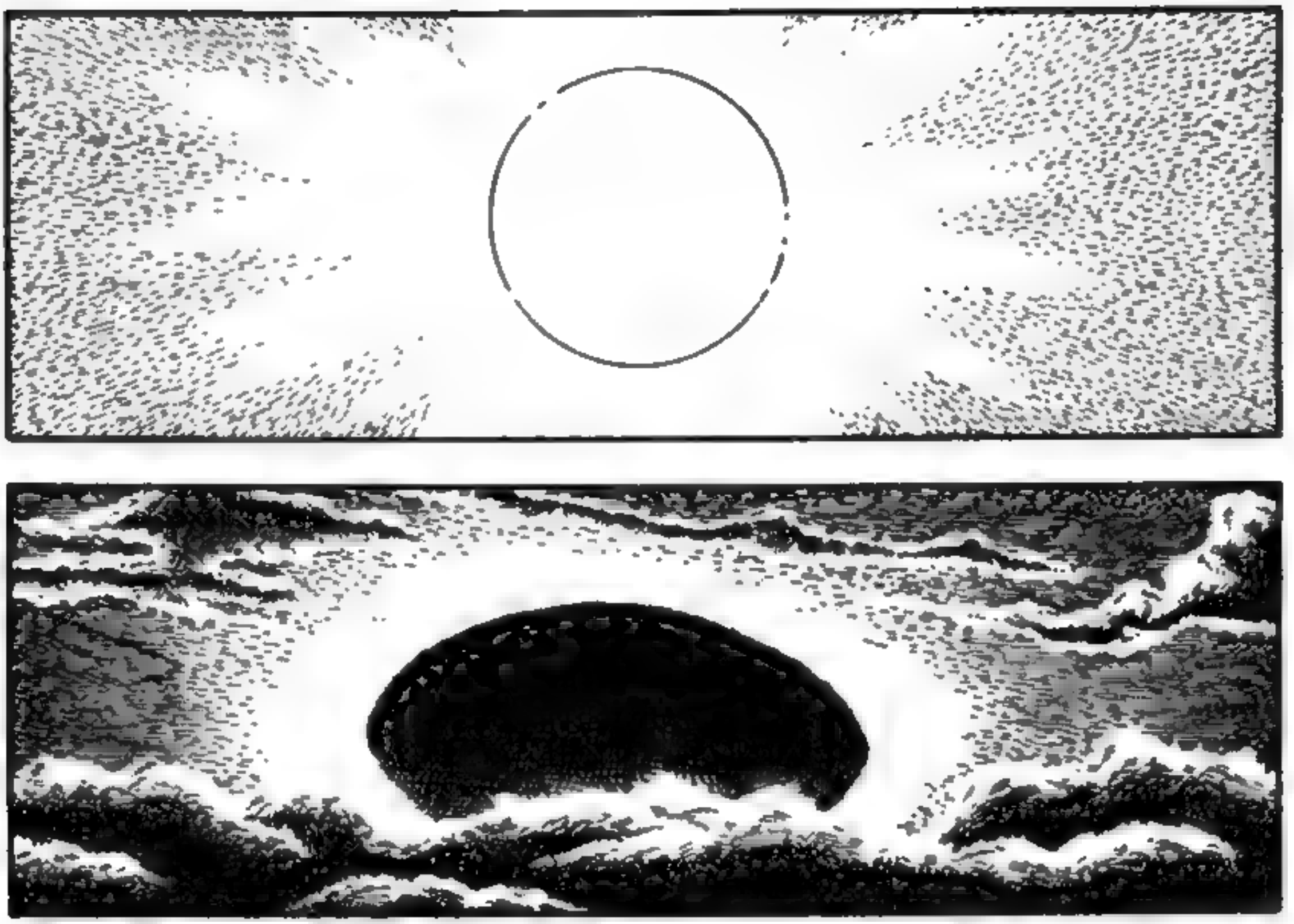
HAHA. OH, I'M SURE HE'LL BECOME THAT WAY VERY SOON.

FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT HE JUST DIDN'T COME BECAUSE HE WAS TOO BUSY WITH WINE AND WOMEN.

WELL, I SUPPOSE WE CAN HAVE HIM COME HERE AFTER HE RETURNS.

HAHA!

GENTLEMEN! LET US ENJOY OURSELVES FULLY AS TODAY IS THE START OF A NEW GLORIOUS YEAR!



HMM, THAT'S STRANGE... IT'S TAKING THEM FAR TOO LONG TO RETURN...

UGH...

AHH!

THEY CAN'T BE JUST SLEEPING OUTSIDE NOW...

PLEASE GO IMMEDIATELY AND FIND OUT HOW LADY SUN WAS DRESSED WHEN SHE LEFT FOR THE RIVER THIS MORNING.

RIGHT, THE SUN IS SETTING, AFTER ALL.

WHAT IS IT, SIR?

YOU THERE!

IN THE USUAL CLOTHES FOR A STROLL OUTSIDE.

HOW WAS LADY SUN DRESSED WHEN SHE LEFT THIS MORNING?

WAS THERE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ..?

HER VALUABLES!?

WELL, SHE DID TAKE HER VALUABLES AS WELL.

I DON'T KNOW, SIR.

WHY WOULD SHE NEED THAT FOR A RITUAL SACRIFICE?

APPARENTLY, LADY SUN LEFT WITH HER VALUABLES!

IT'S AN EMERGENCY!

WHAT!?

YOU THINK SO TOO, ZHANG ZHAO!?

THAT COULD ONLY MEAN SHE LEFT FOR GOOD! LIU BEI MUST BE TAKING HER TO JINGZHOU!

WE MUST INFORM OUR LORD IMMEDIATELY!

WHY THE SUDDEN FUSS...?

IT APPEARS LIU BEI HAS ESCAPED WITH LADY SUN!

PLEASE WAKE UP, IT'S AN EMERGENCY!

MY LORD!

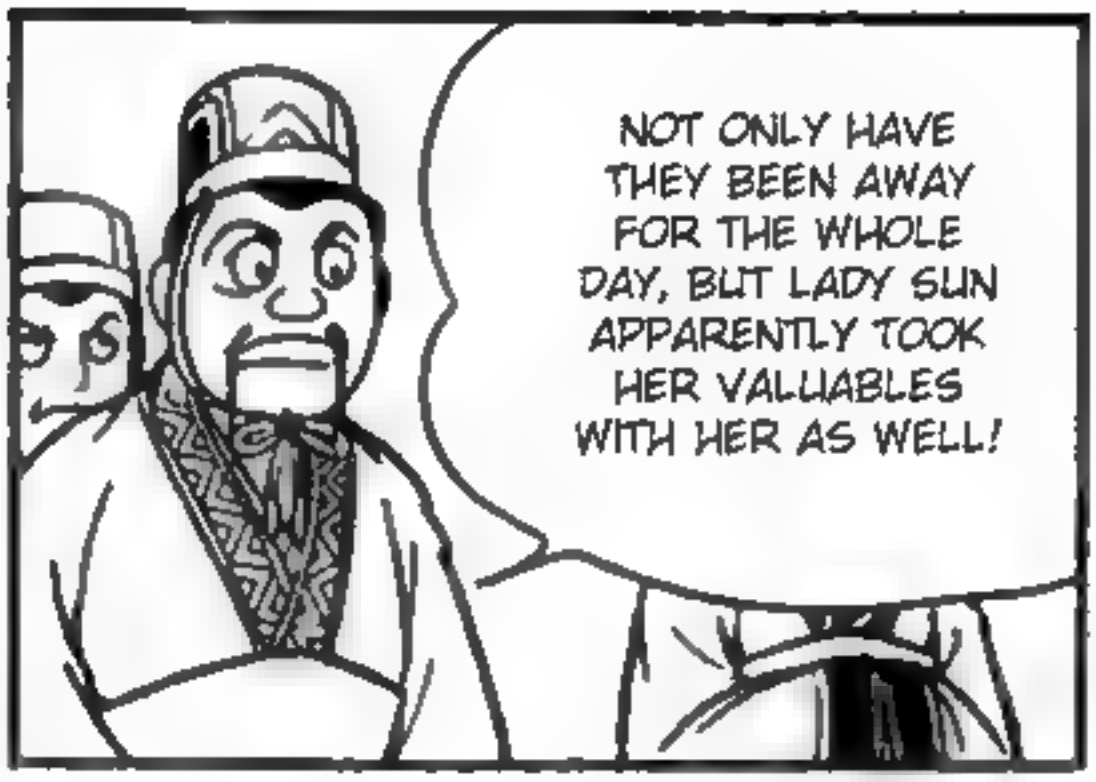
S-SAY THAT AGAIN!

WHAT!?

IS THAT THE TRUTH!?

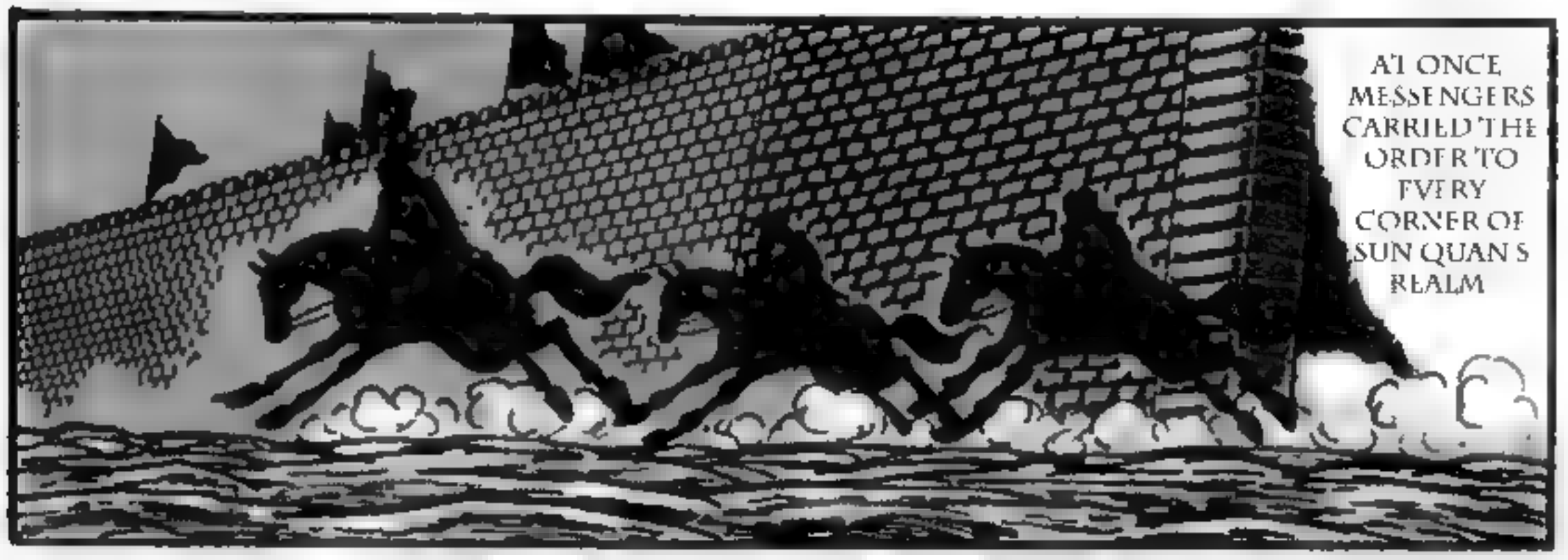
IT APPEARS LIU BEI HAS ESCAPED WITH LADY SUN!


WHA...

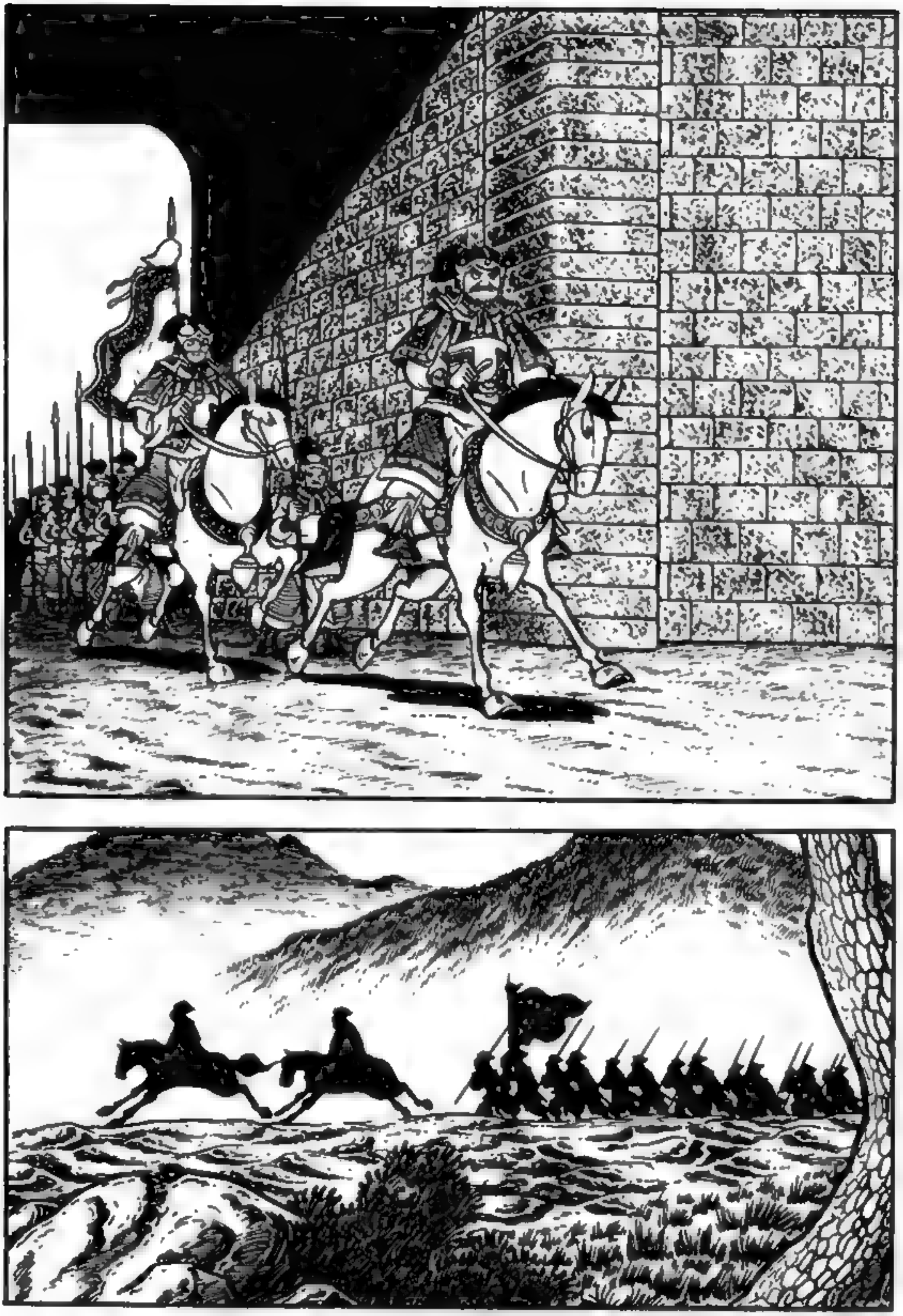

NOT ONLY HAVE THEY BEEN AWAY FOR THE WHOLE DAY, BUT LADY SUN APPARENTLY TOOK HER VALUABLES WITH HER AS WELL!


HE MUST NOT ESCAPE! SEND MESSENGERS TO INFORM EVERY SINGLE LAND AND WATER PASS TO PREVENT ENTRY OR EXIT!


THAT VILE SCUM! AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR HIM, HE STEALS MY SISTER!?


AT ONCE MESSENGERS CARRIED THE ORDER TO EVERY CORNER OF SUN QUAN S REALM


YES, SIR!
CHEN WU! PAN ZHANG!
AT ONCE, SIR!
TAKE 500 SOLDIERS WITH YOU AND BRING LIU BEI TO ME!



THEY LEFT VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING. OUR MEN MIGHT HAVE NOT CAUGHT UP TO THEM YET.

WHAT'S TAKING THEM SO LONG!?

CURSES!

YES, IT'S TRUE. THAT BASTARD TOOK MY LITTLE SISTER AND ESCAPED.

CHENG PU.

MY LORD, I HEARD LIU BEI ESCAPED. IS THAT TRUE?

I HAD CHEN WU AND PAN ZHANG PURSUE AFTER THEM WITH 500 MEN.

WHO DID YOU SEND AFTER THEM?

WHAT!? YOU MEAN THEY'LL FAIL!?

I FEAR THIS MISSION IS TOO MUCH FOR THE LIKES OF CHEN WU AND PAN ZHANG.

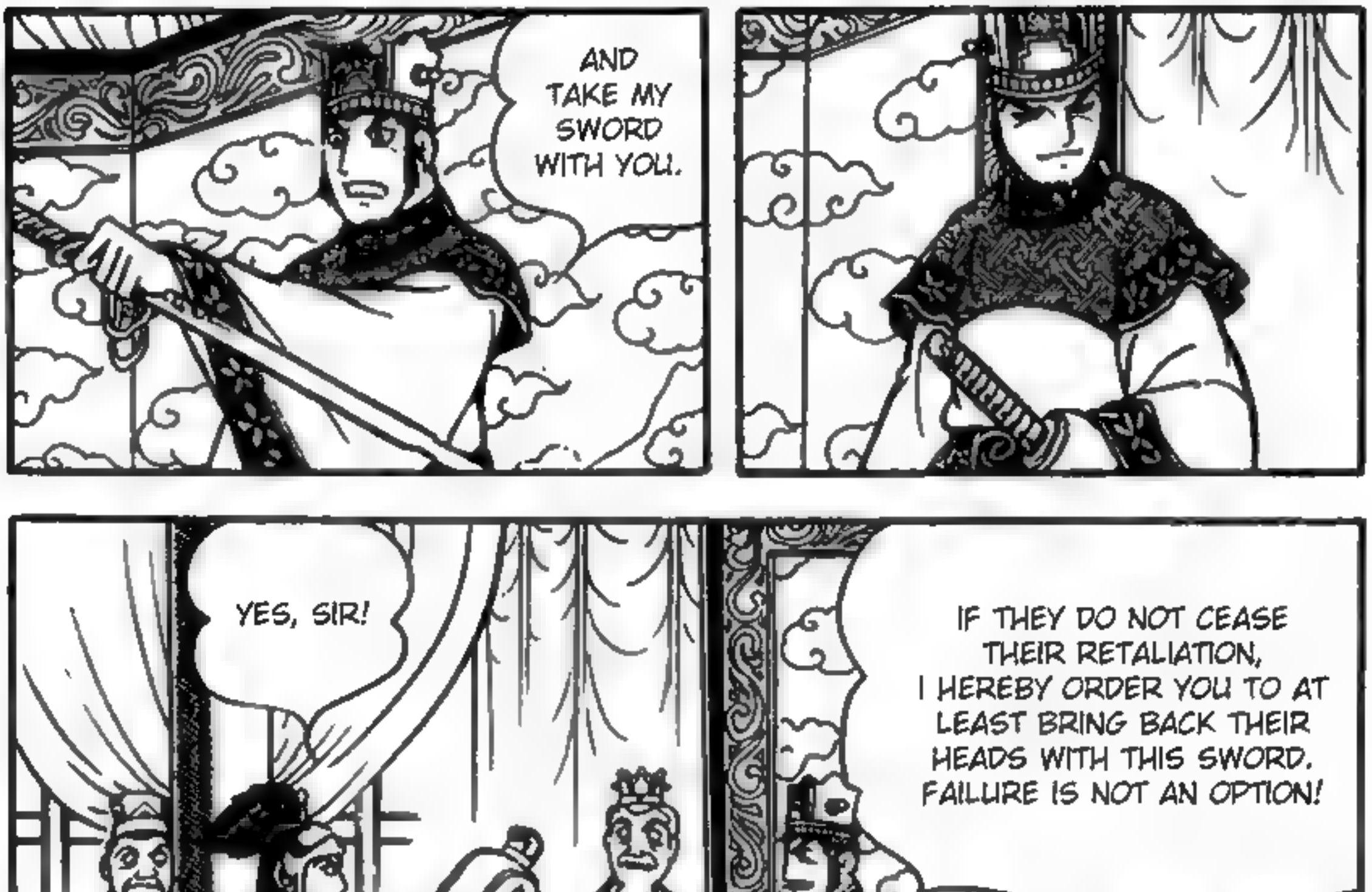
HMM...

I'M AFRAID SO. IF LADY SUN TOOK HER VALUABLES, IT IS CLEAR SHE LEFT ON HER OWN WILL. AND AS MY LORD IS WELL AWARE OF, SHE IS FIERCELY STRONG-HEADED TO THE POINT OF EVEN INTIMIDATING MANY OFFICERS. I DOUBT MOST SOLDIERS WOULD DARE TO DEFY HER.

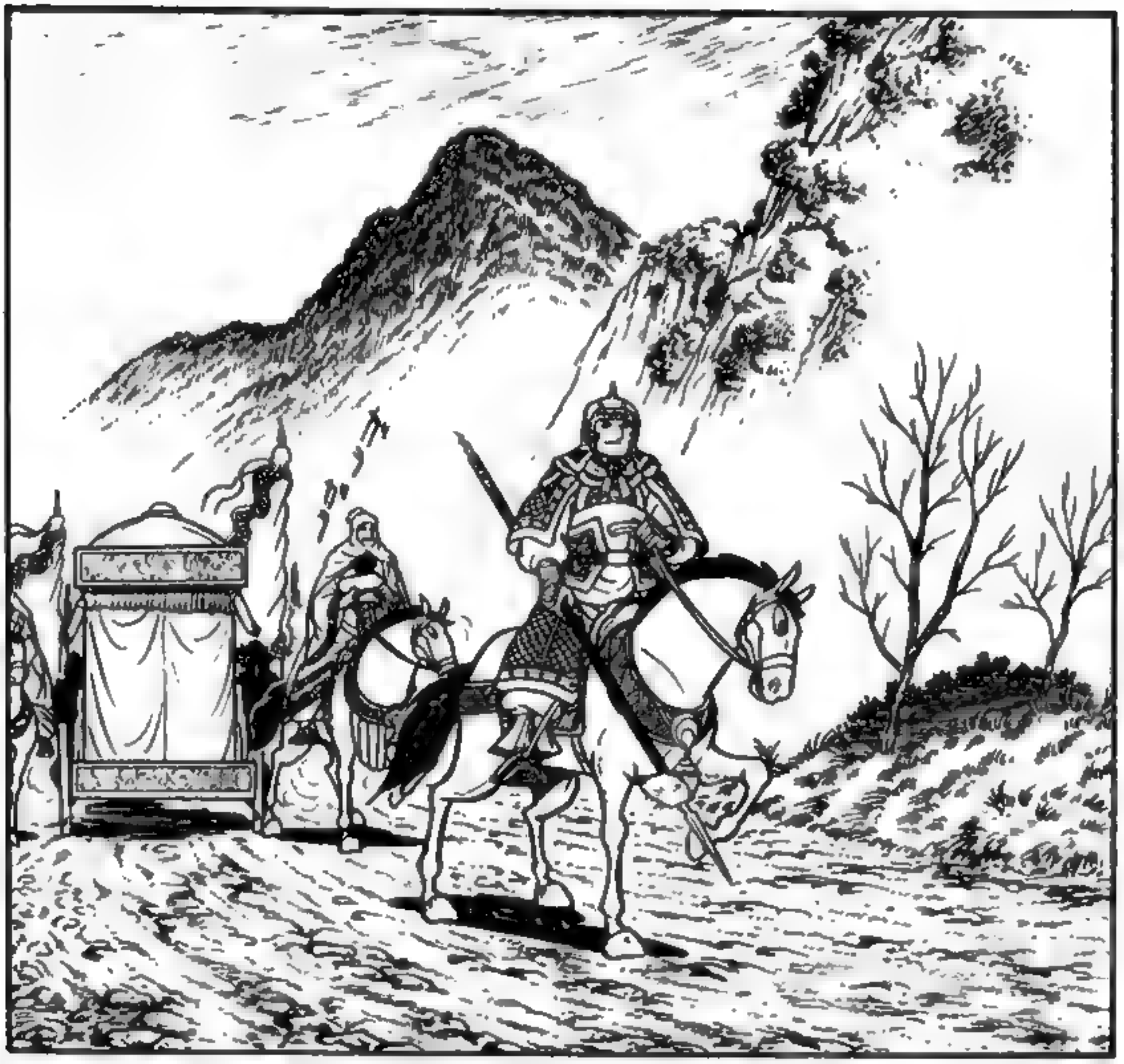
YES, MY LORD.

CALL JIANG QIN AND ZHOU TAI!


I WANT THE TWO OF YOU TAKE 1000 MEN AND CATCH LIU BEI AND LADY SUN!
YOU CALLED US, MY LORD?


AND TAKE MY SWORD WITH YOU.
YES, SIR!
IF THEY DO NOT CEASE THEIR RETALIATION, I HEREBY ORDER YOU TO AT LEAST BRING BACK THEIR HEADS WITH THIS SWORD. FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION!

FEMALE WARRIOR







THERE IS NO TURNING BACK, MY LORD. I SHALL TAKE CARE OF THEM.

ZHAO ZILONG, IT SEEMS THE WU SOLDIERS ARE BLOCKING OUR PATH.

IT SEEMS THEY'VE FOUND OUT ABOUT OUR ESCAPE, AS THEY'VE ALREADY BLOCKED OUR PATH AHEAD.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE MATTER?

PLEASE KEEP MARCHING ON CASUALLY. I SHALL TAKE CARE OF THESE SOLDIERS MYSELF.

IT'S LIU BEI!

HM?

HALT!

IS THAT XU SHENG AND DING FENG BEFORE ME?

WHAT BRINGS YOU TWO HERE WITH SO MANY SOLDIERS?

YES, MILADY.

WHAT!?

UNDER COMMANDER ZHOU YU'S ORDERS, WE ARE HERE TO PREVENT LIU BEI FROM ESCAPING.

BUT...

LET ME REMIND YOU THAT LIU BEI IS MY HUSBAND, WHO HAS BEEN PERSONALLY APPROVED OF BY MY MOTHER, THE DOWAGER! LAY EVEN ONE FINGER ON HIM AND ALL YOUR HEADS WILL FLY BEFORE THE DAY IS OVER!

LOWER YOUR HEADS AND SPEAK ONLY WHEN YOU'RE SPOKEN TO!

Y-YES, M'LADY...

WHEREVER MY HUSBAND AND I GO ARE ONLY OF CONCERN TO MY FAMILY MEMBERS. IT IS NOT SOMETHING YOU RETAINERS CAN DARE TO MEDDLE IN.

NO, THAT'S NOT...

AND IF YOU ARE ACTING UNDER ZHOU YU'S ORDERS, THEN HE WOULD BE COMMITTING TREASON FOR DEFYING THE WILL OF THE RULING FAMILY OF WU!

YOU SOLDIERS FEAR YOUR COMMANDER FAR TOO MUCH. GO BACK AND TELL THAT IMPUDENT ZHOU YU PRECISELY WHAT I SAID. AND IF HE DARES TO EXECUTE YOU FOR FAILURE, THEN I SHALL GO EXECUTE HIM MYSELF!




MEN! RESUME PUSHING MY CARRIAGE.


劍



DING FENG! XU SHENG! DID EITHER OF YOU HAPPEN TO SEE LIU BEI PASS BY THIS WAY?

YOU LET HIM ESCAPE!?

YES, BUT WE LET HIM THROUGH...

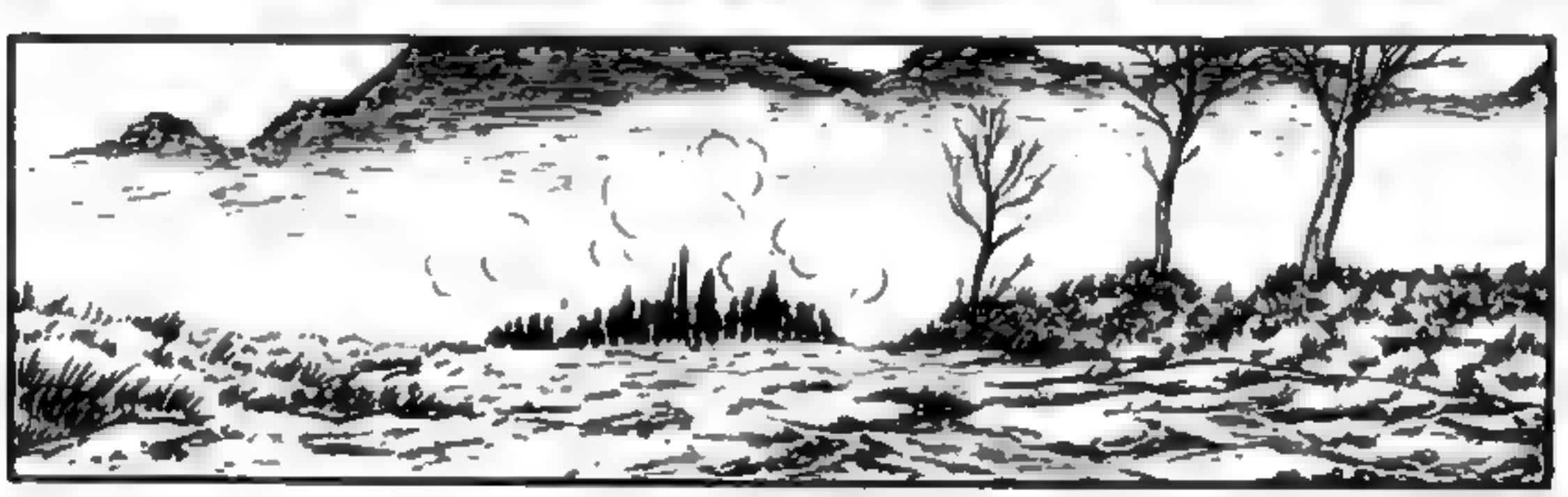

YOU FOOLS! OUR LORD, THE HEAD OF THAT RULING FAMILY, JUST PERSONALLY ORDERED FOR LIU BEI AND LADY SUN TO BE BROUGHT BACK!


LADY SUN THREW AN AWFULLY BIG FIT ABOUT MERE SOLDIERS DEFYING THE WILL OF THE RULING FAMILY. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO...







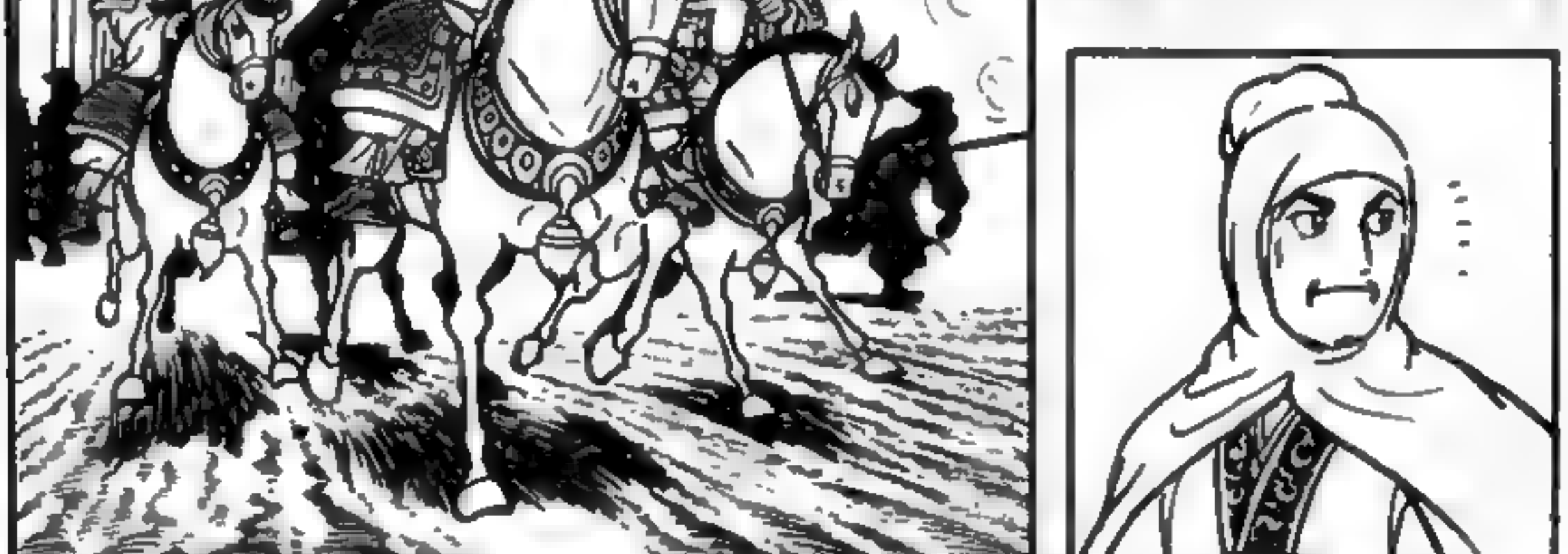



HALT!


THERE THEY ARE!








IMPUDENT KNAVES! YOU DARE ADDRESS ME WITHOUT DISMOUNTING!?














I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH DISRESPECT! GET ON YOUR KNEES AND LOWER YOUR HEADS THIS INSTANT! OR ARE YOU AS SHAMELESS AS MOUNTAIN BANDITS AND RIVER PIRATES!?


MY LORD, LET HER TAKE CARE OF THIS WHILE YOU MOVE ON AHEAD.

YES.





WE'VE COME TO ESCORT YOU AND LIU BEI BACK.

NOW THEN... WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR?

I'M AFRAID THESE ARE ORDERS FROM SUN QUAN HIMSELF.

BACK? I WON'T BE RETURNING TO WU PRESENTLY.

I ASSURE YOU HE WAS DEAD-SERIOUS. HE EVEN ORDERED US TO RESORT TO FORCE IF NECESSARY.

I HAVE LEFT THE CITY UNDER MY MOTHER'S PERMISSION. THERE IS NO POSSIBLE WAY THAT MY BROTHER, BEING THE FILIAL SON HE IS, WOULD DEFY MY MOTHER'S WISHES. YOU SOLDIERS MUST HAVE MISHEARD.

N-NO, JUST LIU BEI.

AGAINST ME!?

LIU BEI IS MY HUSBAND! TO RAISE A SWORD AGAINST A HUSBAND IS TO DO THE SAME TO HIS WIFE AS WELL!

SILENCE!

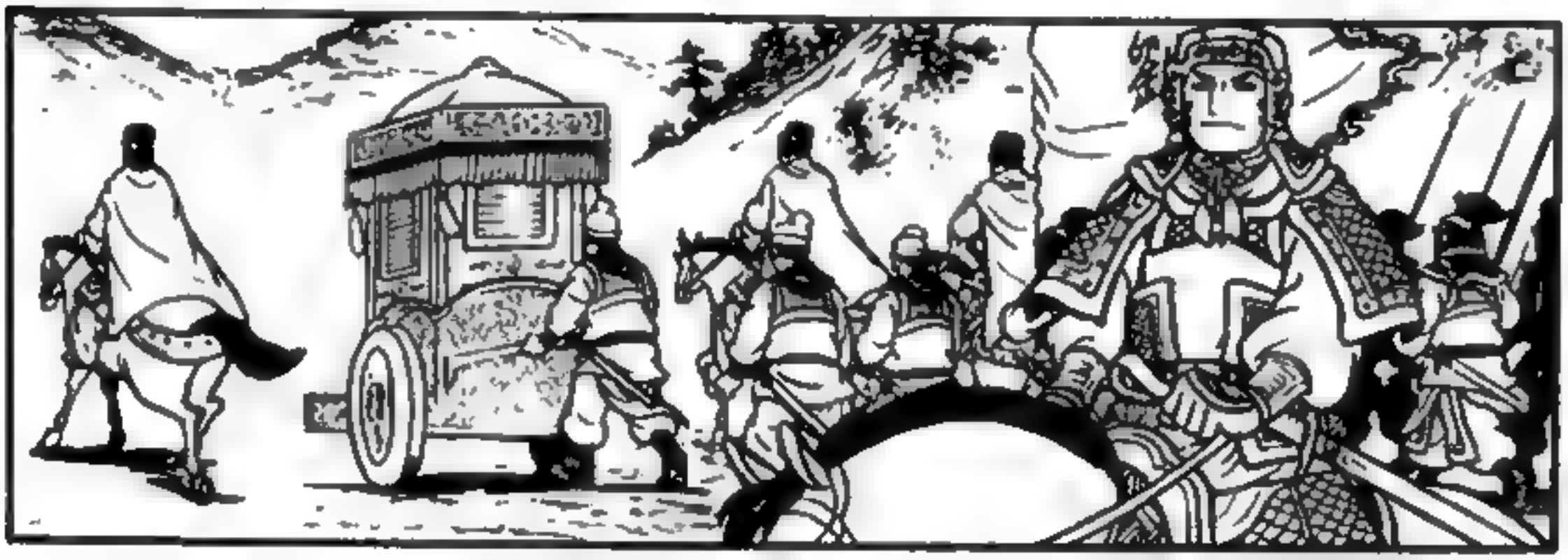
IF YOU ARE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO ATTEMPT SUCH AN ACT, ZHAO ZILONG HERE, AS WELL AS MY MOTHER, THE DOWAGER, WILL SEE TO IT THAT YOU MEET YOUR ENDS.


.....


THE CHOICE IS YOURS! DRAW YOUR SWORDS IF YOU DARE!


YES, MILADY.


LET US BE OFF, ZHAO ZILONG.



NEVER SEEN SUCH A STRONG-HEADED WOMAN IN MY LIFE...

I TOLD YOU. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO...

CURSES...

WELL... LET US RETURN AND REPORT BACK TO OUR LORD.

HE'S GOING TO BE FURIOUS.

陳


YOU THERE! DID YOU SEE LIU BEI AND LADY SUN COME THIS WAY?






將
NO GOOD?


YES, BUT... IT WAS NO GOOD...


DID YOU FORGET THESE ARE OUR LORD'S DIRECT ORDERS!?


WE TRIED TO BRING THEM BACK, BUT LADY SUN INSISTED DOWAGER WU HAD GIVEN THEM PERMISSION TO LEAVE SO NOBODY HAS THE AUTHORITY TO FORCE THEM TO COME BACK...

WITH SUCH WEAK RESOLVE, YOU'D FAIL AT ANY MISSION!

YES, BUT WE LOWLY SOLDIERS CAN'T EXACTLY RAISE OUR SWORDS AGAINST HER...

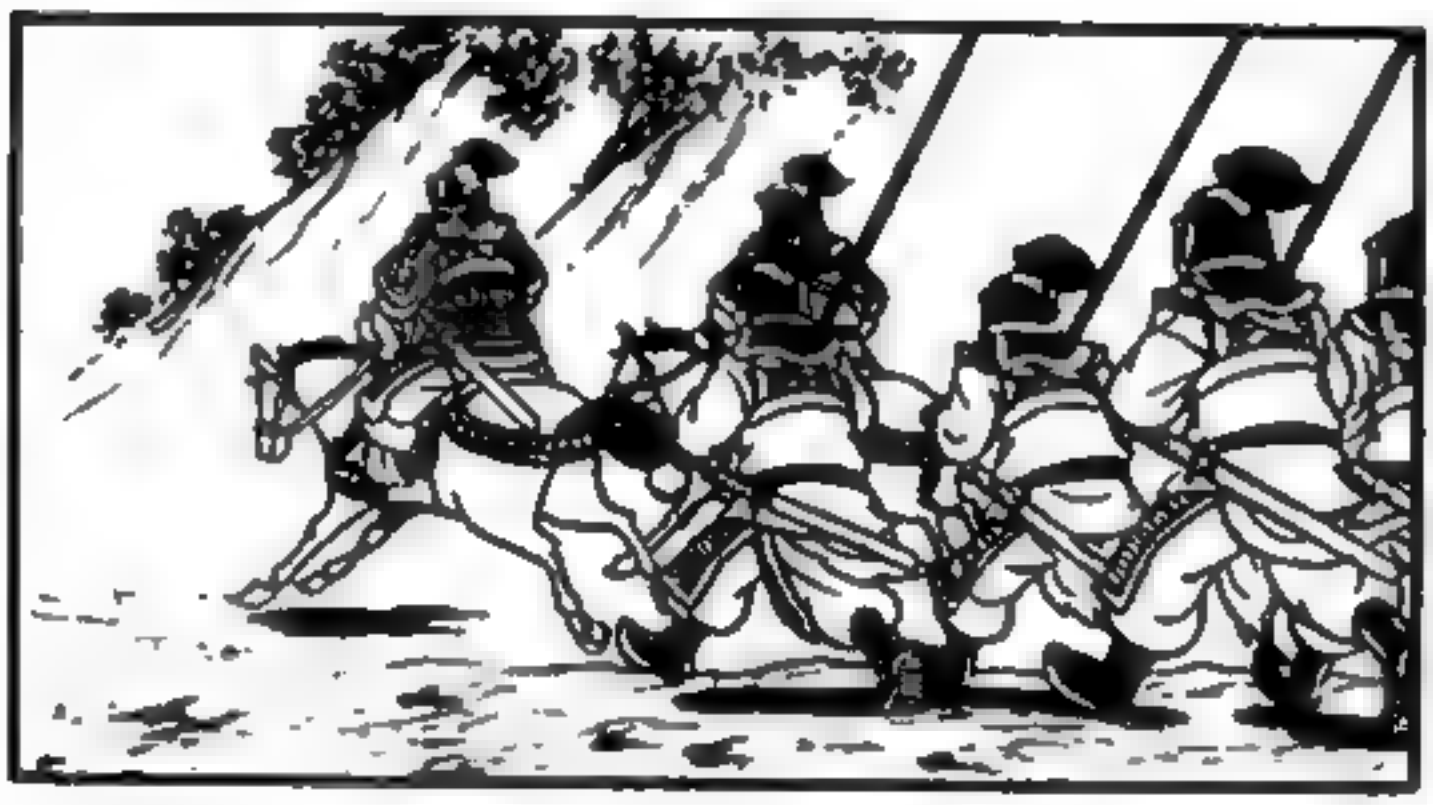
XU SHENG! DING FENG!

BEHOLD! THIS IS OUR LORD'S VERY SWORD! HE HAS GIVEN US DIRECT AUTHORITY TO BRING THOSE TWO BACK, ***DEAD OR ALIVE!***

YES?

GOT IT!

GO TELL COMMANDER ZHOU YU TO SEND OUT FAST BOATS TO BLOCK OFF THE RIVER.




QUICKLY, MEN!


AS FOR THE REST OF US, WE WILL RESUME OUR PURSUIT ON LAND!



ACCORDING TO KONGMING'S INSTRUCTIONS IN THE THIRD POUCH, WE ARE TO WAIT HERE IN THIS FISHING VILLAGE.

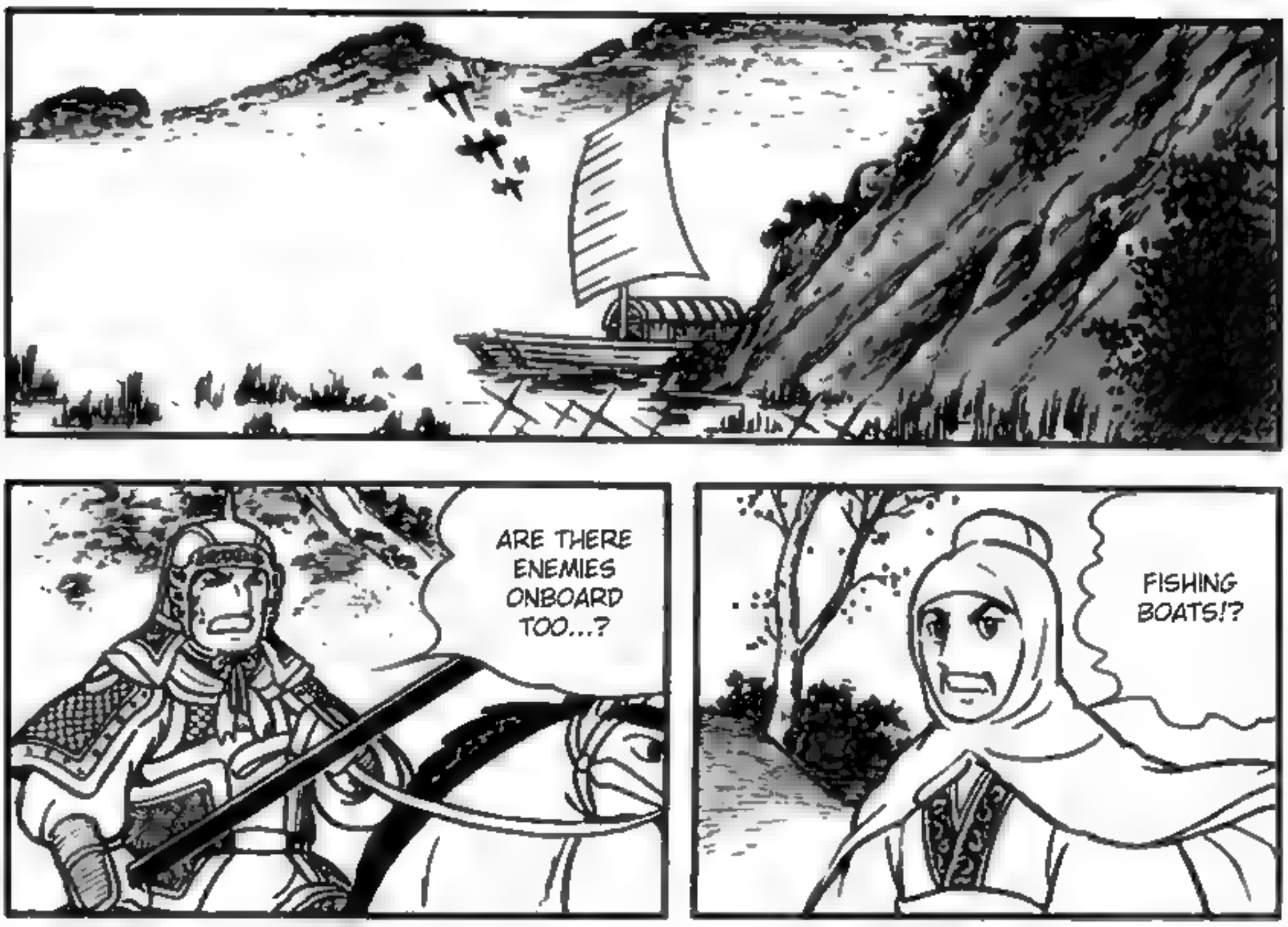
I'M SURE HE HAS SOMETHING PLANNED FOR US. LET US WAIT PATIENTLY.

THAT'S STRANGE... THERE'S NOT A SINGLE BOAT NEARBY EVEN THOUGH THIS IS A FISHING VILLAGE.

GENERAL! OVER THERE!

HM?

THIS SHORE IS SURROUNDED BY MOUNTAINS! THERE'S NO PLACE TO RUN!


ARE THERE ENEMIES ONBOARD TOO...?
FISHING BOATS!?

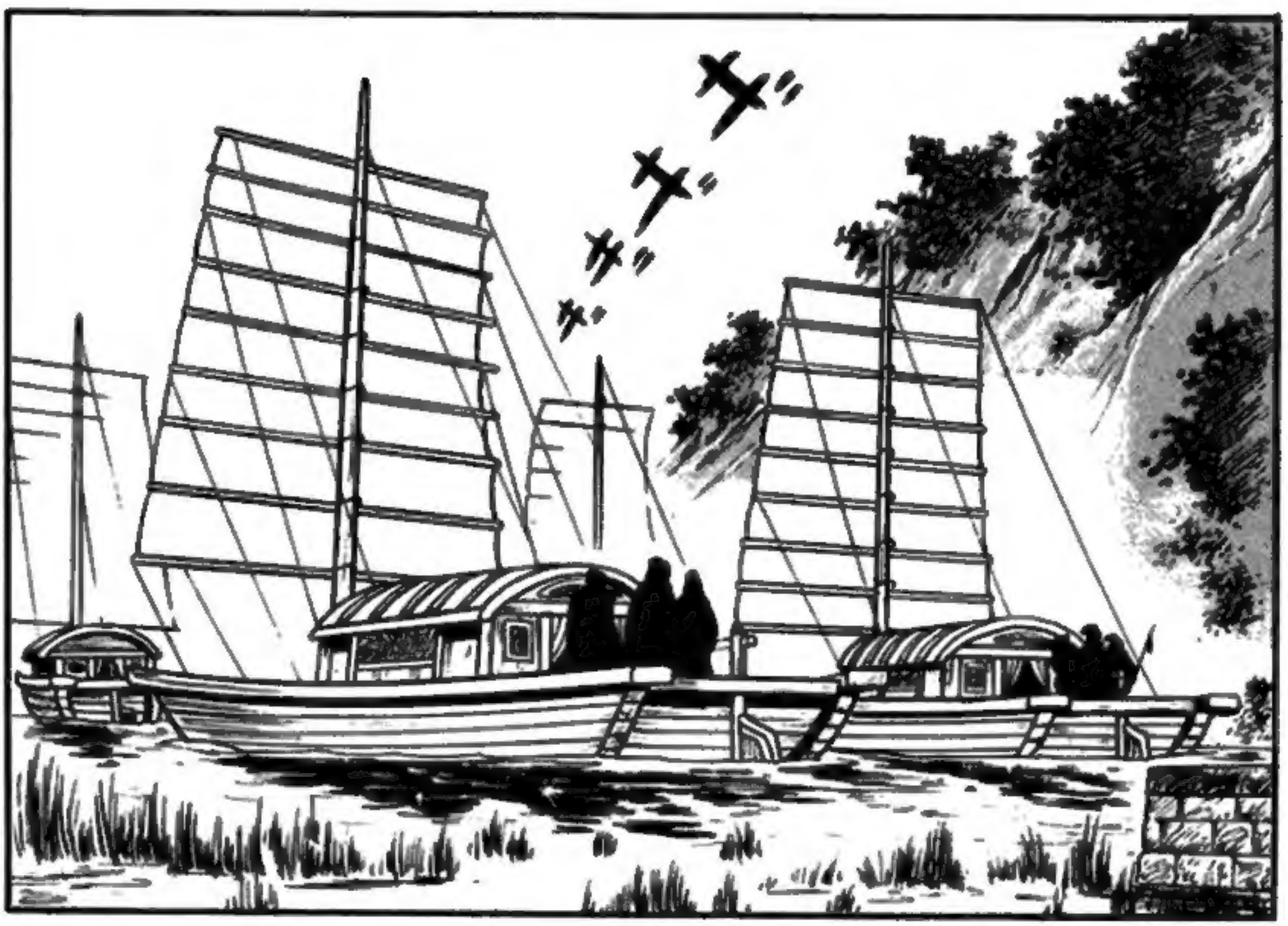
PLEASE COME ABOARD QUICKLY. WE HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE.

KONG-MING!

KONG-MING!




RAISE THE SAILS AND TURN THE BOATS AROUND!





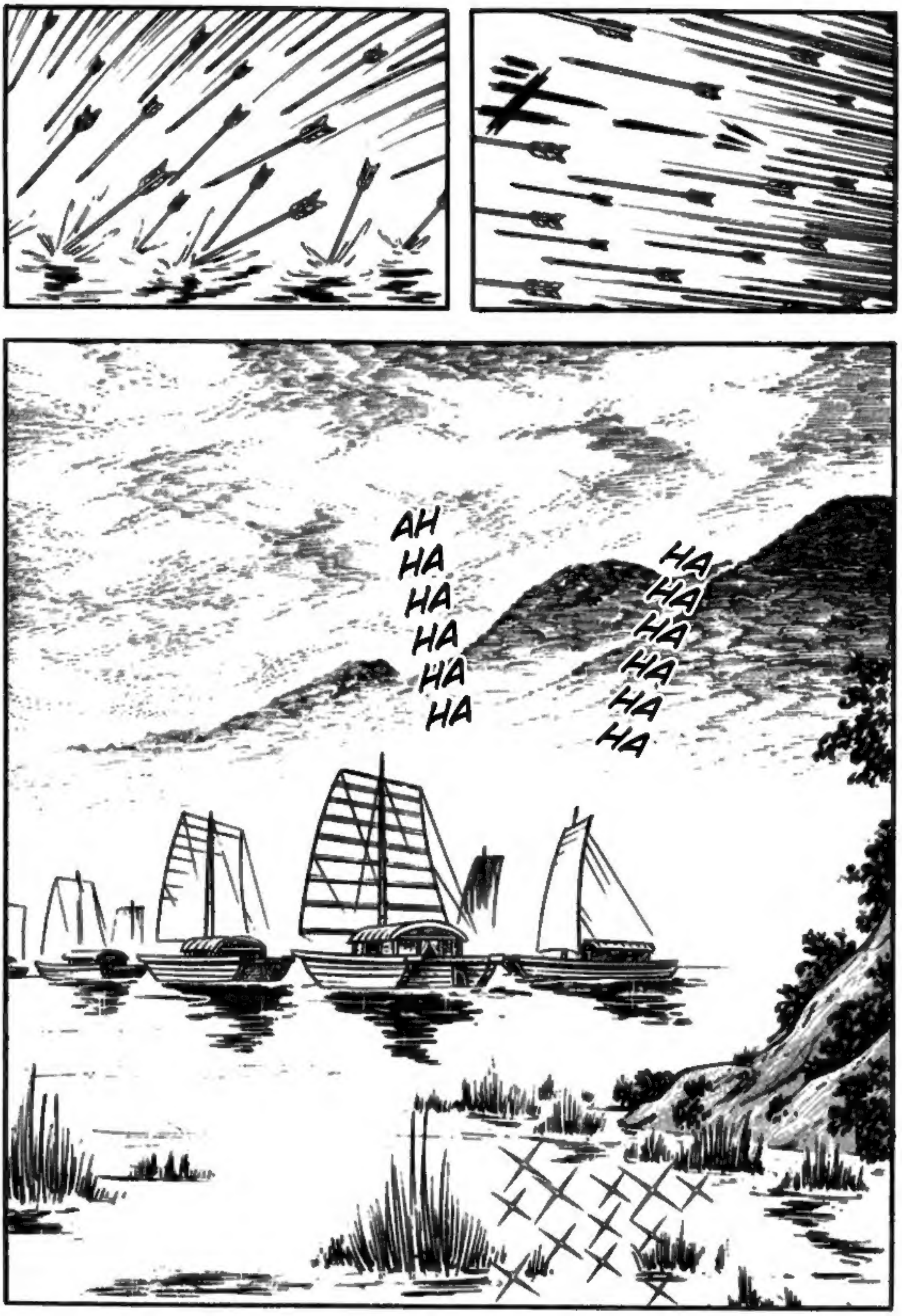
GO PASS THIS MESSAGE ONTO ZHOU YU FOR ME.

STOP RIGHT THERE!

THE NEXT TIME YOU FACE ME, PLEASE DON'T RELY ON SUCH THIRD-RATE TRICKS.

JINGZHOU IS ALREADY LIU BEI'S STATE. THOUGH IT'S FAIR FOR ONE STATE TO TRY AND TAKE OVER ANOTHER, USING THE FAIR-DAMSEL BAIT IS QUITE PITIFUL.

SHOOT! SHOOT THEM ALL!



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横山 光輝

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